

‘Conceptualising inclusion as a practice: A critical analysis of the Greek SEN laws and the ‘inclusive classes’ within a Greek mainstream primary school’.

Submitted by Konstantia Dialektaki, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education in EDD SEN (Special Educational Needs), March 2014.

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Abstract

This case study was located in a primary mainstream school in Greece with the aim to explore how the Special Educational Needs (SEN) legislative reforms with regards to inclusion and inclusive practice have been developed and implemented in Greece. Prior to the study a critical analysis of the Greek SEN laws (Law 2817 and Law 3699) was undertaken to better understand how SEN and inclusion have been conceptualised and how practice has been guided and legislatively established in Greek mainstream schools. The analysis of the policy documents and the literature review indicated that the most dominant form of inclusive practice in mainstream schools has been the operation of 'Inclusive Classes' (ICs). Therefore, the case study aimed to unfold deeper understandings underpinning inclusive decisions and practices for students, their parents and school staff in the school setting, including mainly the IC and play area.

Following an exploratory case study design and employing Grounded Theory (GT) processes, reciprocal relationships of inclusion were reconstructed, deconstructed and understood based on the policy documents' analysis, the observations of actual practice and the participants' experiences and understandings gained through interviews. The findings suggested omissions at both policy level and within educational practice. These omissions imposed restraints on students' social development, as well as in the pedagogical approaches employed by the teachers due to confusion and lack of knowledge and training with regards to SEN inclusive practice and notions. The analysis concludes with a key finding of '*vague inclusive realities*', where terms of inclusion were used to describe processes resulting in exclusion. The discussion and future recommendations are conceptualised on the basis of identifying barriers between policy and practice (special versus general education) as a means to achieve more effective inclusion and an effort to decrease possible practices or behaviours that may lead to '*vague inclusive realities*'.

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Abbreviations

Association of Handicap of North Greece (AHNG)

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)

General Class (GC)

General Class Teacher (GCT)

Greek Governmental Gazette (GGG)

Greek Pedagogical Institute (GPI)

Grounded Theory (GT)

Head Teacher (HT)

Inclusive Class (IC)

Inclusive Class Teacher (ICT)

Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

KEDDY (Centres of Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Support of Special Educational Needs)

KDAY (Diagnostic, Assessment and Support Centres)

Special Class (SC)

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special Educational Needs School Advisor (SEN SA)

Physical Education (PE)

Private Institute (PI)

Chapter one: Introduction

This chapter will be divided in three sections. The first section presents my personal story, experiences and aspects of my academic development that explain the rationale that informed and formulated my study (Watt, 2007). The second section presents the outline of the thesis and the third section presents a description of the significance of the study.

Section one: Personal story, experiences and aspects of my academic development

Before conducting a study, researchers should be aware of the personal reasons that have led them to the final decision (Maxwell, 1996). Conducting qualitative research involves a lot of the researcher's being, given that "no potential researcher is an empty vessel, a person with no history or background" (Cutcliffe, 2000, p.1480). According to Russell and Boahan (1999), researchers: "may not stand apart from their own humanity while creating new understandings and that research is not an objective rendering of reality but a form of participation in the phenomena under study" (p.404, cited in Russell and Kelly, 2002). Therefore, synthesising all data is inevitably accomplished based on the researcher's personal understandings and aptitudes (Finlay, 2002). Based on the above understandings, it was considered important to provide an introduction that will briefly present my personal history and academic background that has influenced and formulated the idea of this thesis.

Personal story

Coming from a small city of north Greece interaction or knowledge regarding disability and SEN was very limited. Nonetheless, my father used to work for the Ministry of Agriculture and he was the head of the Greenhouse project located a few miles outside the city in a big field. Within this field there were two buildings,

one attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and the other building was the special school of the city. As a child the Greenhouse was one of my favourite places to play and explore, however, I was not allowed to play near the other building: The special school. I remember one day asking my father why I was not allowed to play close to that building. My father replied that this was a special school for the children who could not attend the state school because they had some problems. For that reason we were not allowed to disturb them or intrude into their privacy. This answer was not very clear to me so, over the time I kept on asking "Why?", "What problems?", "Why do they not go to my school?". I was confused and I was trying to understand whether this special school was different from my school or whether it was more fun. Finally, one day my father told me that some of these children were 'retarded' or 'Mongols' (that was the first time that I heard what we nowadays call Down Syndrome) and they were slow to learn, for that reason they needed extra help from special teachers. He also mentioned that Papi was going to that school. I said: "Papi?" and he said: "Yes, Papi, he is also a Mongol". Papi was the scariest person in the neighbourhood. He did not use to come out to play very often but, when he did, we all knew that we had to avoid him as rumours were that he was aggressive and used to push little children; but, no one had ever mentioned the word 'Mongol'. In the sound of the word retarded I also remember Tonia, a girl in my class (Year one) whom no one used to play with and they used to call her retarded. I ended up being even more confused and even more curious about this special school and why Papi attends it but not Antonia if the school was both for 'Mongols' and 'retarded'.

After that conversation with my father, each day I went to the Greenhouse I was trying to invent games that would take me closer to the special school, until one day my father took my hand and we finally climbed up the stairs of the special school. I was finally allowed to see through the school's windows and solve the mystery of the special school. However, all I saw was a chalkboard, chairs, tables and pictures on the walls - the same as my school. Nothing was different apart from the fact that the school was outside the city, was called special and children from the city could not go there and the children from the special school could not go to the city schools. Soon, both the Greenhouse project and my days going to the big field came to an end.

Years later in secondary school I saw for the first time a 'Mongol' girl. She was the daughter of one of our teachers and people used to say that the girl was in the school because of her mother being a teacher in our school. However, this 'Mongol' girl apart from the fact that she was attending the public school, was not very different from the rest of us and she was not aggressive or scary like people used to say about Papi. The teachers or the adults never told us not to approach her but for some reason no one involved her in any activities or games during break-time. One thing that I also learned at that age was that when you wanted to annoy another child you could use words like 'retarded' or 'Mongol' to upset them, as they both were understood as implying you were not very clever or efficient, and were considered as insults.

Years have passed and while I was doing my bachelor's degree in psychology I was introduced to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, a manual for mental disorders including: Down syndrome, Attention Deficit Disorders, Autism and many more. My academic understanding about SEN and disability was related to the descriptions in the DSM including criteria that people needed to meet in order to be classified as Autistic, Down syndrome and many more. Notions like disability and SEN were becoming more and more appealing to me and motivated me to volunteer in the Association of Handicap of North Greece (AHNG) in order to explore and better understand the field of disability and SEN.

In my first visit to the supported accommodation for young people with SEN, the first 10 minutes were puzzling. I was not sure how to behave and what to say to the people and I felt as if I was the one lacking social skills and I was not able to engage in any eye contact. The staff who welcomed me finally suggested I should take a seat and after 15 minutes I was having a conversation with one young man (labelled at that time as 'retarded'); the conversation was fluid and funny and soon I felt very welcome and overwhelmed by the fact that I could communicate with everyone. I was becoming part of a group where everyone was the same but different. On some occasions the communication was non-verbal but still possible.

Towards the end of my first visit one of the staff asked me to follow her to the next room to discuss my thoughts regarding my visit and my plans as a volunteer. She

explained to me that it was perfectly normal if I was feeling overwhelmed or even scared. Her advice to me was that I needed to remember that everyone share common feelings and understandings and everyone is the same but different where normality is something very subjective. If I decided to remain and volunteer for the AHNG I should never behave towards the young people as if they were different or fragile. She explained that they will know and they will treat me as if I am different and they will eventually not accept me. She also added that, if I decided to volunteer in the AHNG I should be prepared that when we will be going out for activities, other people might stare at us or make comments. She said this was also natural and she repeated that normality is very subjective - I did volunteer and worked in the AHNG for more than two years.

At that time, the common perception towards disability and SEN was expressed through pity, fear or philanthropy. This particular group of people were classified or perceived as mentally disordered (by society or in well-established manuals like the DSM), with specific or given characteristics, but in reality they were all unique and very talented. My experience in the AHNG was powerful. I came to understand what inclusion means by experience, as the academic textbooks at that time and the literature around inclusion as an educational term were not known to me. At the same time, I experienced, as an insider, how segregated this group of people was from society and how lucky I was to have had the opportunity to discover the beauty of diversity, multiculturalism, acceptance, the true meaning of respecting everyone regardless of 'personal attributes' or 'disabilities', but also place meaning into words like 'Mongol' or 'retarded' based on personal understandings and experiences.

Through my studies in psychology and while doing my master's degree in child development, my learning experiences gained at the AHNG remained strong. Nonetheless, my understanding in terms of research was mainly expressed through gathering numerical data to form categories and prove hypotheses. However, I was concerned about the fact that people and children are not categories and they do not share the exact same characteristics but 'we' as 'researchers' or 'psychologists' tend to create categories to describe people and create science.

During my EdD academic journey at the University of Exeter and given my theoretical background and past experiences, I became especially interested in inclusion and how it could be applied within the Greek society, to minimise the gap between 'special school' and 'general school'. I thought, at that time, that applying inclusion and closing the gap, might reduce stigma. It would allow every child to have an equal opportunity of being accepted and the choice of being educated in Greek schools without being viewed as a 'Mongol' or 'retarded'. I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to be taught by very inspiring lecturers who contributed to my understanding of the nature of inclusion, diversity, SEN, acceptance, the role of policy in making inclusion possible and achievable. Moreover, they enabled me to appreciate and understand the nature of qualitative research (which was not widely used in psychology according to my personal knowledge and experience at that time) by being introduced to notions of positivism and interpretivism.

More precisely, during my second week at the University of Exeter, we were asked to read an article written by Avramidis and Smith (1999): '*An introduction to the major research paradigms and their methodological implications for special needs research*'. In spite of the fact that comprehending the notions discussed in the paper proved to be a very difficult task (as these notions were very new to me), I was especially intrigued and motivated to learn more and understand better. These new concepts and ontological principles shifted the scientific enquiry from merely being seen through the eyes of hypotheses, numerical data, statistical analysis and categories. In addition, one of the modules regarding policy and education was truly inspiring and enlightening, pointing out the importance of policy in education but placing it within the realm of practical actualisation. I came to understand that within a structured and regulated society practice can only be successful when it derives from a strong theoretical background, but a theory can only be 'proven' to be strong when tested or challenged within a practical setting. Within the academic context that the University of Exeter has provided me, I was able to appreciate how significant the role of educational policy is within inclusive practice in order to achieve efficient implementation and provide education to all children within the mainstream schools.

Most importantly, while I was studying at the University of Exeter, I came to understand how equally important (compared to psychology) is the role of policy within education. I came to understand that every policy should be well and accurately developed according to context specific factors and risk assessments in order to secure and safeguard inclusive endeavours and educational objectives. The choice of the topic for my doctoral study was the outcome of new knowledge, past experiences and my personal journey through conceptualising ontological and methodological approaches, disciplines and dilemmas, as well as the formation of a more holistic view in regards to disability, SEN and inclusion. Endeavouring in qualitative research has shifted my focus from understanding behaviours and practices through experiments or numerical data and enabled deeper understandings that unfolded meanings, actions and embraced individuality.

My personal story, experiences and aspects of my academic development explain the rationale that informed and formulated my study, influencing my decision to explore two aspects of inclusion in Greece. The first part is concerned with the analysis of Greek SEN laws with a main focus on how applicable and well defined the laws are in order to achieve a practical implementation of inclusion within mainstream schools. Part two aims to unfold deeper understandings underpinning inclusive decisions and practices for students with SEN, their parents and staff in the school setting. The study was conducted in a Greek (IC) and in the school's play area.

Section two: Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. This first introductory chapter presents an account of the personal, academic and theoretical journey that informed the study and my interest in SEN and inclusion. It concludes with a description of the significance of the study.

In the first section of the second chapter, the literature review is presented, in relation to Greek studies that have explored the operation of the ICs, Greek policies and inclusion. The second section presents an overview of the Greek educational context to familiarise the reader with the Greek educational culture.

Finally, the third section of this chapter presents the history of SEN laws with a main focus on the two latest SEN policy documents: Law 2017 and Law 3699

The third chapter presents the methodology including the methods that were used in the study: document analysis, observations and interviews. In addition, the chapter presents the specific processes that were employed while analysing the data in the study. Finally, it consists of a description regarding trustworthiness and ethics.

The fourth chapter presents a detailed account of the findings that led to formulate the six emergent themes of the study, a summary of the researcher's observations and findings. It also includes the SEN policy documents that proved relevant to this study including the similarities and omissions that were identified when comparing the Laws 2817 and 3699.

The fifth chapter presents a discussion of the findings describing the '*vague inclusive realities*' that has emerged from the findings taking into consideration the general socio-political context in Greece.

The sixth chapter presents the final conclusions of the thesis, offers recommendations for future research, explains the contribution of the study, as well as the limitations in the study and provides a final conclusion.

Section three: The significance of the study

The literature review that will be presented in Chapter two refers to the Greek SEN educational policy, the ICs, Greek pedagogical terms and inclusion within the Greek context. The literature that has been reviewed has revealed a shortage of qualitative studies in Greece, especially regarding the operation of ICs. The IC is a designated class within the mainstream school for students with SEN that offers SEN support; students with SEN attend the IC for at least two hours a day.

This doctoral thesis will take a step towards filling this gap in the research. This thesis will discuss whether the current inclusive endeavor in Greece (as expressed through the formation of ICs) and the attempt to close the gap between special and mainstream schools has been pragmatic by conceptualising the

underlying factors of the existing policies and schools' operation. This has been attempted by analysing the SEN policies and exploring the ICs operation. Therefore, the present study was designed as a case study that involved the analysis of the SEN policies in Greece and aimed to explore the nature and operation of ICs in a mainstream school in Greece by employing GT methods for data analysis and collection.

Due to the shortage of theories and qualitative research regarding ICs, a single exploratory case study was chosen as a research methodology, employing a GT methods for data analysis and collection. This choice of methodology and methods could enable the development of a theory grounded on research that will attempt to demystify and conceptualise the implementation, application and operation of inclusive practice in Greece. Therefore, the present case study seeks to generate a theory based on document analysis, observation and participants' reflections that could be useful to better understand those practices. 'Theory', though, does not refer to the 'construction of tightly framed theories that generate hypotheses and make explicit predictions' (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004, p.517). Rather, it is a written articulation of the thoughts, mysteries and puzzles that the social context being studied presents, so as to further develop these thoughts and beliefs and understand them in-depth, through a process of data collection, analysis and synthesis.

It is important to indicate that this study is not an evaluation of the inclusive practice and operation in ICs. It is rather an exploratory study that can add to the general understanding and identify possible tensions between policy and practice that may be the barriers to their effectiveness. Furthermore, the aim of the study is not to claim generalisation of the findings but enrich policy-makers' and schools' understandings about the nature and operation of ICs based on the participants' views and policy documents. However, given the fact that all Greek schools follow the same curriculum, text books and school hours, it is possible that educators in other schools can relate to the phenomena that have been explored in this study. In following chapter the literature review with focus on the Greek context will be presented.

Chapter two: Literature review within the Greek context

Chapter two will be divided in three sections: Section one presents the literature review in relation to ICs, inclusion and policy reforms. Section two presents an overview of the Greek educational cultural context and inclusion. Section three presents the SEN policy review with a focus on Law 2817 and Law 3699. According to Hutchinson (1993) literature review can provide the rationale for the development of the study and identify gaps in literature. In the present study the literature review identified a gap in research (IC).

Section one: Inclusion, policy and ICs

In the first section of this chapter, a literature review will be presented based on research studies and papers related to SEN policy, inclusion and ICs in Greece. At this point, it should be mentioned that there is an ample number of studies or papers conducted in Greece discussing SEN, but the focus is frequently on specific categories like dyslexia, autism and these studies are mainly approached from a medical/remedial point of view. These studies have not been considered relevant to the aims and scope of the current study that was oriented towards conceptualising policy and inclusive practices without emphasising specific SEN categories and ways to remediate the 'problem'. Therefore, the literature review has mainly focused on Greek papers and research projects that have discussed both educational policy reforms and implications or explored the nature and operation of ICs. Before embarking on the literature review regarding educational policy and the operation of ICs, it is important to briefly review the context in which inclusion has been developed in Greece, as well as how the term has been used and defined in the Greek literature review.

Inclusion as a historical phenomenon in Greece and as a term within the Greek literature review

According to the literature review, the sequence that has been followed over the years in Greece to address students' specific learning difficulties started by employing medical and cognitive models to explain learning and behavioural difficulties to the pedagogical and social community (Zoniou-Sideri, 2000; 2004a; 2004b; Delli-Syriopoulou, 2003). The aim was to eliminate past perceptions that society and educators held regarding disabled children and low achieving students whom they perceived as 'lazy' or 'naughty'. The understanding that students may be facing difficulties of a cognitive nature that acted as barriers to their academic development became very popular in the 1990s. Such difficulties were approached as problems of a cognitive origin that could be remediated. The developments in other countries and the introduction of concepts like 'integration' and later 'inclusion' by the political and scientific community around the world, shifted the focus and perceptions (Delli-Syriopoulou, 2003). A more sociological view was opposed to merely exploring the barriers through experimental studies in order to discover solutions that would 'cure' the 'problem'. Therefore, the discourse around disability had slowly moved away from being purely of a medical origin to also being perceived as an outcome of societal perceptions and conditions. Within this context, notions of stigmatisation and marginalisation that restricted children's right to be equal members of society with equal chances, regardless of ability, become popular (Stasinou, 2001; Zoniou-Sideri, 2004; Tzouriadou 1995).

This alteration of perceptions changed the political and academic agenda and formed the ground from which to advocate for the advancement of people with disabilities. Emphasis was placed on equal opportunities and the fact that disability should not be treated in hospitals, institutes and special centres with a focal point on pathology, medicalisation and remediation (Syriopoulou-Delli, 2010). Rather, disability could involve the acceptance of diversity and the advancement of opportunities within society, including the acquisition of life skills provided within an educational setting rather than a medical setting (Zoniou-Sideri, 2004a; 2004b). Therefore, the discourse of disability brought the discourse of special education but it was still dealt with within the closed doors of the private

schools and not systematically organised by the state (Zoniou-Sideri, 1998). The discourse regarding closing the gap between special and public education by providing academic opportunities and professional support within public education became a political matter with the SEN Law in 1981. The term “inclusion” was brought into the Greek educational literature due to 1) the omissions in policy 2) the fact that the conditions and the perceptions regarding the education of disabled people and students with SEN (a term that also came to being) did not dramatically change, and 3) most importantly the pressure to follow educational and political developments in other countries. The SEN Law 2817 in 2000, introduced the ICs into the mainstream schools. Since then, the discourse of inclusion has become especially popular within the academic and professional community. The philosophy of inclusion became one of the most fundamental and significant models. Within the Greek context, it was also considered as a ‘panacea’ that would ‘resolve’ the problem of discrimination and marginalisation of the disabled people and the students with SEN within society (Zoniou-Sideri, 2004).

However, the fact that this philosophy was borrowed from our European and Western partners led to confusion, regarding its notion and practice when it was attempted to be translated within the Greek reality and vocabulary.

In the Greek literature review and educational language, the term inclusion has been translated into four distinctive words: “ένταξη”, “συνεκπαίδευση”, “ένσωμάτωση”, “ισότιμη συνεκπαίδευση” (a generic translation of each word is: ‘inclusion’, ‘joined-education’, ‘inclusion’/‘integration’, ‘full-inclusion’). These terms have been used interchangeably to describe or define inclusion. These words have similar meanings but are not the same; they may imply similar philosophies and practices of similar origin but still they are not the same. For example, the word “ένταξη” has been used to express either inclusion or integration, or the term integration has been translated as either “ένταξη” or “ένσωμάτωση”. In some writings the term ‘ισότιμη συνεκπαίδευση’ has been used as synonymous to full-inclusion but then again inclusion in Greek has also been expressed by the use of the word “ένταξη”. Lately the word ‘ένταξη’ have been used to describe the participation of students with SEN and the resources available to ensure equal opportunities and human rights. While the word “ένσωμάτωση” has been used to place emphasis on all aspects of education,

referring to acceptance by peers and support that goes beyond academic achievements. Creating a common and clearly defined language is very important, as the use of different terms to express one single notion has many implications for both policy and education. It can lead to confusion among academics and practitioners within the teaching community. In addition, there are many cases within the literature review, where the term inclusion is discussed but, definitions are not provided for its use within the Greek reality and practice; notions become vague and understandings general. Zoniou-Sideri (2004), argues that:

“We have to be critical towards the use of foreign terms within the Greek bibliography and towards the attempts of the specialists to use these terms in order to describe the Greek educational reality, it is not appropriate to use these terms in the Greek bibliography uncritically ” (p.37).

Similarly, Soulis (2008) states that for the term “συνεκπαίδευση” (joined-education), Greek researchers have used various terms to express it and as it suited the needs of their hypothesis. Although these terms reflect different theoretical frameworks, like for example: ‘inclusion’ (“ένταξη”), ‘integration’ (“ένταξη”/“ένσωμάτωση”), ‘mainstreaming’ (“ένταξη”/“ένσωμάτωση”), these terms have been used interchangeably. According to Soulis (2008), “ένταξη” (inclusion) refers to the arrangements that are made and the methods that are used for the participation of students with SEN. While, ‘συνεκπαίδευση’ (joined-education) refers to the advancement of the quality of education that is provided within the mainstream school; in order for all students to participate in school. According to Soulis (2008), joined-education is a more current and advanced version of the term inclusion.

Haroupas (2003) defines inclusion as the means that certify the co-location of students with SEN in mainstream schools. Joined-inclusion certifies the equal opportunities in support services without discrimination. Haroupas also explains that he chose to define the English term inclusion as full-inclusion (“ισότιμη συνεκπαίδευση”). Full-inclusion (“ισότιμη συνεκπαίδευση”), describes the educational tendency against discrimination and towards the education of all students in one setting but with the necessary resources and personnel.

Hmellou (2011), also states that scholars in Greece have used terms interchangeably, like, “ένταξη”, “συνεκπαίδευση”, “ένσωμάτωση” to describe the English term “inclusion”. This was performed without explaining the differences of the terms or without giving different meanings to the terms. Hmellou (2011), adopts the term full-inclusion (“ισότιμη συνεκπαίδευση”), as opposed to the terms inclusion (“ένταξη”) and inclusion/integration (“ένσωμάτωση”). The terms ‘inclusion’ and ‘inclusion/integration’, according to Hmellou (2011), refer to the social inclusion of students with SEN. While the term joined-inclusion refers to the promises of the state to cater for every child within the school mainstream education with the appropriate infrastructure.

In the light of all these different terms and notions surrounding inclusion and its definition in both Greek and international bibliography (Bayliss, 1998; Zoniou-Sideri, 2004; Soulis, 2008; Paliokosta and Blandord, 2010), the meaning of the term inclusion and ‘full-inclusion’ (that have been used throughout this study) will be explained, based on the researcher’s personal stance and in relation to the Greek context.

Inclusion:

- 1) Refers to the promises of the state to provide public and free education to all students, with proper infrastructure and personnel. Education should not only be specific to special education and to specific settings that students with SEN attend. It is viewed as a whole school practice (cooperation-communication, sharing duties) and
- 2) the general notion that inclusion aims to eliminate past discriminatory perceptions, stigmatisation, marginalisation, offer equal opportunities, respect the students’ rights and ensure students’ wellbeing and acceptance.

Full-inclusion:

The term ‘full-inclusion’ has been used to emphasise that inclusion is **partial** or not implemented and there is a need for either more actions, clarity, resources, personnel, provision, monitoring, assessment, clear policies, infrastructure, training, plans, emotional support, cooperation and so on. It is situated within the Greek context and it has been used with regards to the study of this **thesis**.

Literature review regarding policy and practice related to the IC operation.

The main goal and strategy to achieve inclusion, as stated by 'New Democracy'- the political party in power in Greece at the time- is: "by increasing the number of students with special problems of education in the 'common' schools, with the implementation of supportive programmes of school inclusion" (in Zoniou-Sideri, 2006, p.287). In this context, the main form of inclusive practice and provision in Greece involved 'locational integration' in either special schools or in mainstream (Vlachou, 2006). Therefore, the students with SEN who are diagnosed by the KEDDY (Centres of Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Support of Special Educational Needs) or the Medical Practices and require systematic support in the mainstream school to respond to the demands of the curriculum, attend either the general class (GC) with support from a SEN teacher or the designated IC (EADSEN, 2005; Law 2817; Law 3699). Students participate in the IC with other students of similar or different learning difficulties. Their attendance is up to a maximum 15 hours per week. The ICs operate only when more than three students with SEN are enrolled within a school and the maximum number of students attending the IC is 12. The lessons are delivered by the IC teacher (ICT), who according to the legislation, uses adapted didactic methods according to the student's Individual Educational Plans (IEP) (Law 2817; Law 3699).

ICs were first introduced with the Law 1143, as 'special classes' (SCs); reforms of Law 2817 produced changes in terminology and SCs were renamed as ICs (Vlachou, 2006). This reform (with the change in terminology) was not followed by a change in organisational and provisional level neither was it due to the evaluation of the ICs' effectiveness. The model of IC provision quickly became the dominant one of special educational provision- although it has been proven to be controversial in other countries (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005; Vlachou 2006). In 1983-84 there were seven IC, 602 in 1992-93 and over 1000 in the academic year 2003-4 (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005). Despite the impressive increase in numbers, there is no official evidence concerning their appropriateness, operation and efficiency to ascertain that these numbers represent the effectiveness of the system.

One of the most detailed books regarding Greek policy and special education was written by Stasinou in 2001. In this book, the history of Greek legislation regarding special education is presented from the beginning of the 19th century up until the time that the Law 1143 was passed in 1981. The book reviews policy from a critical point of view providing information about the development of legislation, Greek society's perspectives about disability and the policy and societal changes that led to the adoption of a strategy (the term used by Stasinou in his book) of inclusive education.

The two points discussed in the book which are relevant to this study are: the ICs and the role of the SEN School Advisor (SA) in the public schools. More precisely, Stasinou (2001), mentions that although the number of SCs had increased remarkably over the years, the increasing numbers did not represent a pragmatic educational reform. The reform was not based on a strong theoretical background that accounted for factors like sociopolitical modifications and existing infrastructure, or specialised personnel that could cater to the needs of 'special students'. Most importantly, the Ministry of Education was lacking a well-conceptualised philosophical pedagogy and policy adjusted to current Greek educational practice and societal perceptions. This type of policy endeavour was defined by Stasinou (2001) as the 'politics of cupboard/showcase' ('Πολιτική της Βιτρίνας' in Greek), a vain attempt that was doomed to fail.

In addition, Stasinou (2001), refers to role of SEN SA that was constituted in 1981. Up until that time, there were only general SAs in Greek mainstream schools. The need for this new post was the outcome of introducing special education within general education by creating SCs. The role and responsibilities of the SEN SA based on Law 1143, can be summarised as the following:

- 1) cooperate with the HT, the teachers and the students in the schools under the SEN SA's jurisdiction.
- 2) motivate teachers to be creative and have initiative to resolve problems that might arise in schools.
- 3) plan meetings and seminars for educators
- 4) plan regular visits in schools to discuss with teachers the progress of students with SEN

5) monitor the school libraries and

6) update teachers with the latest pedagogical, scientific and didactic developments.

One of the reasons identified as a barrier for the effective delivery of the SEN SAs duties in schools was the fact that Greeks were reluctant to perform systematic assessments but rather preferred to engage in general evaluations like 'The student is progressing' or 'The lesson was beneficial for the students'. This type of general evaluations lacked in-depth rationalisation that should have been based on experience and theory. Another barrier was attributed to the fact that when the SEN SA might have wished to act more drastically to overcome obstacles or deficiencies detected in the schools' operation or in teachers' approaches, the SEN SA's actions were either perceived as hostile or that they did not comply with the school's democratic spirit.

"The role of SEN SA today, is only accepted when teachers agree with the SA's views. But, the problem is not with those who agree but with those who do not care" (SA in Stasinos 2001, p.249).

In relation to the above, the findings of a recent small-scale qualitative study conducted by Salmond and Gioka, (2013), suggested that the constitution of SEN SAs and their responsibilities (assessment, planning, direction and providing support, information, supervision, cooperation and coordination between all bodies involved in education) has never gained substantial and operative implementation due to the constant socio-political changes in Greece. The findings also suggested that the duties and the responsibilities of the SEN SAs have not been well-defined and that their role remains passive. Their practices cannot be actualised and their duties have been limited to conventional school visits, scheduling meetings and seminars to inform educators about changes in textbooks and completing customary assessments in the end of the school year (Salmond and Gioka, 2013). One SEN SA who took part in the study described a number of factors that restricted him from performing his duties successfully. Some of these are outlined:

- he had been in his post for 22 years and had never received assessment for his performance

- his role as inspector and coordinator could be effective and achievable given the vast number of schools that he has under his jurisdiction.
- he also stated that in most of the cases, parents requested meetings to complain about the teachers and
- the SEN SA also believed that there was a general crisis in the Greek educational reality –not only in his sector- regarding meritocracy, pedagogical endeavours and beliefs that were evident at all levels of education and constrained any effort from moving forward

Therefore, according to Salmond and Giokas (2013), there is a need to readjust and specify the role of the SEN SAs in order to provide better and more efficient services that will allow them to engage in more proactive and effective practices.

Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2005) conducted a study exploring the operation of ICs and briefly reviewed some of the Greek SEN laws (the Law 1143 and Law 2817). The 157 SEN teachers -from the region of Attiki and Pireaus- who participated in the study, completed questionnaires regarding: Teachers' and students' characteristics, the operation of ICs and the differences between ICs and SCs.

According to the policy review, inclusion both as a practice and as an educational policy had failed to be inclusive in character. In 1981 the law introduced SCs in mainstream schools in an attempt to demolish the dichotomy between special and general school. In 2000, the Law 2817 introduced ICs as opposed to SCs in order to comply with the inclusive educational reforms in other European and Western countries (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005). This political decision to abolish SCs by converting them into ICs and without making any changes to their operational character led to the conclusion that inclusion was a 'bureaucratic trick' (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005; Zoniou-Sideri 2004a; 2004b). Soulis (2002), had described this reform as a 'political decision' opposed to an educational decision. Troyna (1994) argues, "in education and in other areas of public life, the language of a set of political principles associated with liberal democratic convictions was adopted by those pursuing political aims which were neither liberal nor political" (in Poulson, 1998, p.420).

The 63 out of the 92 teachers who took part in the study (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005), had worked in both SCs and ICs and had noticed no difference between the two settings. In addition, the SEN teachers stated that the main difficulty that

they were faced with, was the lack of cooperation with both parents and other staff. Another difficulty was related to materials and textbooks, however, it is not specified in the paper whether the teachers were referring to lack of materials and textbooks or the nature of materials/textbooks. In addition, the participants identified that cooperation and resources were areas for future improvement. The findings also indicated that ICs were located in unsuitable spaces, like for example storage rooms. Finally, the authors stressed that their literature review indicated there was a lack of quantitative official data and research projects investigating the operation of ICs. Similar findings were reported by the Pedagogical Institute of Greece, faculty of the Ministry of Education which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (Pedagogical Institute, 2003).

A number of Greek papers and research studies regarding policy and SEN education in relation to inclusive practices in Greece, have identified ICs as the dominant model of mainstream school SEN provision. The context of the policies has been considered exclusive in character and the reforms that have been attempted were described as unsubstantial, lacking epistemological analysis and realistic framework (Soulis 2002; Zoniou-Sideri 2004a; 2004b; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005; Soulis, 2008).

As mentioned before, inclusion was rather the outcome of a political decision and the pressure of the European and Western educational developments rather than a pedagogical decision that would have led to the construction of a truly inclusive educational system (Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou, 2006; Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006; Zoniou-Sideri and Nteropoulou-Nterou, 2007). Within this context the inclusive movement was perceived as an uncritical adaptation of foreign terminology and pedagogies that did not comply with the Greek reality, societal perceptions, as well as, teachers' beliefs and knowledge (Stasinou 2001; Skordilis 2006; Skordilis 2007; Vlachou 2006).

Soulis (2008) argues that inclusion as an educational reform has created the circumstances to potentially minimise past anachronistic beliefs by introducing the concept of inclusion into general education. Moreover, he argues that a careful examination of educational policy documents over the last decades indicates that the reforms that have been attempted regarding special education, have contributed significantly in order to minimise forms of exclusion and

discrimination in mainstream schools and within the society. At the same time, he indicates that there is a gap in the formation of policies that do not create the circumstances for inclusion to flourish. In addition, the fact that the academic and scientific society in education was oriented towards inclusive practices and supported inclusive philosophy, has also influenced the political scene to move towards a model of inclusive education. Souli's (2008) study on "Teachers' beliefs about inclusion", suggested that teachers were positive towards the idea of a 'School for All' (Law 2817), however, lack of infrastructure, knowledge, training and specialised staff make them feel reluctant to venture into inclusive practice. In his final conclusions, he states that one of the most important aspects of successful inclusion is teachers' cooperation and active participation. At the same time he notes that the laws need to be refined and reconceptualised in order to close the gap of inequalities and allow inclusion to become actualisation.

The latest official ministerial demographic research report, 'The mapping of Special Education', was conducted between 2003 and 2004. The research was delivered by the Greek Pedagogical Institute (GPI)¹ in 2003, and was based on questionnaires. It aimed to collect and present official data from the whole population regarding the SEN services and students' characteristics. The data were collected from all SEN school units, organisations and bodies in the country. In addition, all the laws, ministerial decisions and presidential decrees were recorded and placed in chronological order to produce an official database of policy documents for future reference and information.

More precisely, the research aimed to record and gather information about:

- 1) the structure and characteristics of SEN
- 2) the characteristics of educators and all practitioners involved in SEN
- 3) the population that provides services in special education
- 4) data regarding the active associations and educational bodies in Special Education and
- 5) gather all the legislation and policy documents in special education.

¹ The GPI is a department of the Ministry of Education responsible for the conduction of scientific research in primary and secondary education.

The results of the research report had shown that SEN support was mainly provided in primary education. In 2003-2004, 94.3% of the SEN schools units were located in primary schools. The remaining percentage (5.7%) of active SEN school units was located in secondary education. This low percentage is representative of the need to provide SEN support at all levels of public education. In addition, the report points out that many areas in Greece do not have any provision for SEN or the provision provided in specific areas is insufficient. However, no further information was offered regarding the actual counties where these insufficiencies were evident.

In addition, 73% of SEN support was provided through the ICs in mainstream schools. According to the researchers, this percentage revealed the need to improve the operation of ICs, given that this was the most widespread choice for SEN provision. At the same time, the researchers stressed that the Ministry of Education needed to develop more forms of SEN support for all school units (for example, SEN schools) in order to widen the choices available to students. The infrastructure of the SEN school units was found to be poor. Only one in three schools had a sensory class, 14.5% of special schools had an informational communication technology room, 13.7% had a speech therapist and 43% of the special schools that were co-located with mainstream schools operated with one class. The 60% of ICs were located in inadequate spaces that were below average compared to GCs within the mainstream schools.

Moreover, the results demonstrated that the public SEN services outside the mainstream were mainly focused on general education and academic achievements. Services for any other type of provision were limited. More precisely, 15.4% of SEN services provided psychological support, 6.7% speech therapy and 18% vocational education. Moreover, only 21.1% of SEN school units participated in planned pedagogical programmes and most of the programmes were found to be related to specific subjects, like environmental programmes and learning difficulties. Geographically, the main cities that participated in these programmes were the capital city, the co-capital and the island of Crete. Finally, the population of students that attended the SEN units were identified with specific learning difficulties (56.2%), 14.9% with general learning difficulties (intellectual disability), within the remaining 28.9% were students with visual or hearing impairment, children with autism, speech and

language difficulties and severe learning difficulties. Finally, all the policy documents since 1985 were collected and listed in the final chapter of the research study, to create a listed database where all policy documents could be accessible to the stakeholders and the public.

Overall, the GPI's demographic research identified the main types of learning difficulties students were diagnosed with and revealed areas that needed attention and improvement, for example, infrastructure and pedagogical programmes. However, in this type of endeavour, it would also have been beneficial to devote a chapter reviewing the SEN legislation to better understanding how the policy documents' were formed over the years. Relating these understandings to the actual research data would have provided a more holistic picture of SEN in Greece; instead of merely providing a list of all the policy documents since 1985 and presenting findings in the form of percentages. Finally, the discussion chapter could have included a more detailed account about future recommendations in relation to the data instead of briefly outlining the five main areas for future improvement: 1) Infrastructure, 2) provide SEN at all levels of education, 3) establish SEN school units in all geographical areas, 4) monitor the services for SEN and 5) provide a broader range of training opportunities for educators in special education. Finally, up until today, according to the literature review there has been no further research reports of this character. Therefore, all the official data published by the Ministry of Education regarding special education in Greece are dated back to 2003-2004.

Section two: An overview of the Greek context in relation to education, SEN and inclusion

This section aims to provide an overall review of the Greek context to facilitate the reader's understanding regarding the Greek educational operational system based on its cultural context and heritage in an attempt to understand the role, quality and ethos of the contemporary school by presenting 1) the historical development of notions and perceptions in relation to *paideia*, *ekpaideusi* (for

explanation of these terms see below) and 2) conceptualise 'inclusion' based on international views and within the Greek context.

Paideia and ekpaideusi

The terms *paideia* and *ekpaideusi* have a long and rich historical, cultural and political account that goes back to the ancient Greek and Hellenistic period (Habib, 2008; Robb, 1994). *Paideia* and *ekpaideusi* (education/training) although usually interrelated are certainly distinct. The first can be seen as a wider educational philosophy, a philosophy of being, while, the second is the practical application of the evolving theory. Therefore, *paideia* can be described as a paradigm that is concerned with ontological and epistemological discourses of educational knowledge and theory. This theory and knowledge is constructed and generated through *ekpaideusi* (methodology), schools and educators (methodological tools).

Paideia as a historical concept has its origins dating from the fifth century B.C. "It is the basis of democracy", a political system that has influenced and inspired the former and current political systems around the world (Korovesis, 2009; Rhodes, 2003). According to Korovesi (2009), "democracy is the main and constant exportable product of Greece over the years". According to Fotopoulos (2008), *paideia* does not solely refer to *ekpaideusi*, it refers to the development of the character of the individual and the holistic acquisition of knowledge and skills to become better citizens in order to better serve the public life. For the Greek way of thinking, the legislations formed the 'democratic person' and the 'democratic life'. The *polis* (city) legislations had a pedagogic character and having a prosperous life meant developing thriving legislations and an educational system that is congruent with the legislations. It can be argued that *paideia* in ancient Greece was a privilege of the aristocrats, as access to higher education was expensive. However, *paideia* was and remains a concept that goes beyond education in its practical sense, therefore, the concept of *paideia* is universal and applicable to everyone. *Paideia* refers to the communication and interaction between the parents and their children, at all levels of society, not only the upper class. It refers to the process of rearing a child in becoming a moral citizen.

Paideia, according to Plato, is a lifelong process aiming to advance and elevate the human spirit to achieve their full potential in terms of personal, moral, political, social and cultural development. *Paideia*, as well as, the communication of knowledge was a concept and a practice that was not interwoven with material and industrial gains or personal profit but rather, with the formation and broadening of concepts like: *arete*, ethics, citizenship or cultural identity (Marrou, 1977; Beck, 1964).

Ekpaideusi can be described as the Greek word for education or training. According to Liasidou (2008), it refers to a structured educational and training regime, formed and coordinated by the public government; it is an extended meaning or technical term for the construction of schooling. *Ekpaideusi* was aiming to develop and prepare students into becoming effective citizens (Beck, 1964). Its values were based on ethos and individual, as well as, public welfare. The scope of education was (based on Platonic ideals) about the preparation of body and mind and aesthetic sense (Robb, 1994). Notions related to spiritual liberation and not to the acquisition or prospect of occupational or material gains (Beck, 1964). In ancient Greece, school used to be a place where teachers and students met to discuss and analyse epistemological issues. In this environment, people were mainly trying to explore, understand and discover new phenomena and practices. Students were actively interacting and views, as well as, approaches were formulated based on mutual dialogues. What is especially interesting about the Athenian type of schooling is that it was not formally institutionalised, there were no specific requirements for students or formal curriculum and the curriculum from *polis* to *polis* did not have a common character (Marrou, 1977; Beck, 1964). However, there are a few evident drawbacks related to practical notions of education that need to be underlined. The most critical, as it was mentioned before, is that higher education was mainly a privilege of the upper class involving mainly males with a few exceptions in particular city-states like Sparta or Crete (Marrou, 1977; Beck, 1964). Therefore, an exclusionary tradition existed in those days, mostly for those members of the community that were considered to be 'vulnerable' in some respect or the members of working class that were ascribed a lower class status. Unfortunately, discriminatory attitudes and perceptions are still part of the contemporary Greek society towards particular groups of people and students: students characterised as SEN,

immigrants or students from the lower economical class. Nonetheless, ancient Greece as a historical and edifying period was a landmark in terms of growth and expansion of higher notions, ideals and beliefs. Certainly, during that period, *paideia* and *ekpaideusi* were about exploration, philosophy, aesthetics, nobility, social mutuality, awareness, physical and artistic engagement and strengthening, as well as, constructive communication.

***Paideia* in contemporary Greece.**

“School education that is steered by the government, it is affected by *paideia*..., which is offered by the wider society; the civilisation, the principles that are cultivated, the activities of the political parties, and the ethos of the political leaders. The influence of *paideia* is by far bigger than people might expect. Frequently, *paideia* can destroy what school education might create” (Marathefis, 1992, in Liasidou, 2008, p. 230).

Indeed the impact of *paideia* is indisputable and holistic in the formation of any educational arrangement or policy-making. In this respect, if *paideia* is deficient or there are elements of corruption in the formation of *paideia*, the political and education system then, corruption can be evident in various aspects of public life (education, politics, formation of laws, favouritism, values, etc). Therefore, in order to determine the pedagogical structure and the education that is deployed in any country, one needs first to understand its *paideia*; the ideological and philosophical principles that govern every society. The Greek society is currently built on paradoxes; I would consider that Greece is undergoing its darkest period, pedagogically, politically, economically and ideologically. The economic crisis (which has unfortunately been used over the last years by the government as a justification for the inequalities that Greece is witnessing), the unemployment, people’s sociopolitical disorientation in relation to values and morals, the antithetical and usually non-fruitful discourses held by the political parties, corruption and the exploitation of public goods and commodities by different political regimes have radically modified the nation’s character, its consciousness, its belief in societal mutuality and its trust and respect to fellow-citizens, politicians and ideals. The fact that society is currently lacking *paideia* is

a clear axiom among Greeks (Fotopoulos, 2009). The term *paideia* now is used with its broader philosophical and ideological sense and mainly refers to peoples' lack of morality, social consciousness, philosophical exploration and cultural advancement. The lack of *paideia* and its ideals are currently reflected in the structure of society and its educational system. Our current educational system is mainly focused on memorisation and exams rather than exploring ideas, developing ideals and preparing students in becoming critical and creative thinkers and citizens.

The ethos and quality of the educational system does reflect society; if *paideia* is deficient, the schools' structure will also be dysfunctional and this is possibly one of the reasons that, nowadays, small communities of the same region differ in terms of pedagogical approaching and implementation. But who lacks *paideia*? Is it the young people who lack *paideia* or is it the older generations who forgot the ideals that accompany *paideia* and therefore, the development of the educational system reflects the latter's lack of *paideia*? On the basis that children attend school to learn the knowledge, skills and values that the older have already mastered and wish to transmit to the younger generations (Proefriedt, 1975), I would have thought that it is the "wise" group of people who lack very distinct sets of values and beliefs and which will inevitably affect the type of *paideia* that the younger will "adapt" in their lives. Therefore, although, *paideia* can be seen as an abstract concept, it is, at the same time, very explicit in the way that it affects society and tailors school education. For example, if a school's education is aiming to focus more on students' well-being in the sense of personal actualisation and aptitudes, rather than academic achievements, but is governed and is operating within a *paideia* that is focused on academic achievements measured against scores through examinations to finally achieve financial security, then the school is forced to employ practices that satisfy and meet the standards that the government and the society sets. In this sense, if *paideia* in schools is mostly understood and expressed through academic performance and written exams, then any attempt by the school management and educators to move away or refine their objectives is hindered by its *paideia*. Therefore, as Maratheftis (1992) has argued: frequently, *paideia* can destroy what the school education might create. In the following sections, some of the inequalities that

may have led to the formation of the pedagogical structure as it is today will be further discussed.

***Ekpaideusi* in contemporary Greece.**

Nowadays, the contemporary *ekpaideusi* in Greece, in the sense of schooling, is time and place situated, compulsory with set curriculum and didactic hours. This type of education is organised by the societal authority, which intentionally decides and transmits its collective knowledge, as well as, forms of training and skills to young students. According to Tsaousis (1989), *ekpaideusi* is the form of specialised socialisation, which is insisted on, through the schooling process, to students and is aiming to transfer knowledge and skills. At present, school represents the physical space where children are educated and trained into students. The aim of their education is mainly focused on acquiring knowledge and skills that will allow them to later succeed in life by getting into the university. The entrance to the university is more related to material gains rather than ideological gains reflected in the concept of *paideia* that was discussed before. Education in Greek schools can be described as the number of subjects that are chosen by the Ministry of Education to be transmitted to students to enrich their knowledge (the curriculum). Therefore, students are trained throughout the school years in core subjects by their teachers to learn the knowledge that will help them in succeeding in exams. This type of training takes place in schools where in most occasions the teacher is the leader of a monologue-type lesson. Most of the time is spent with the teacher lecturing and the students listening, whilst occasionally (when time allows it), children may ask some lesson-related questions (Padeliadou, 2005). This kind of intellectual development, in Greek schools, can be better understood by Freire's (1970) "banking" concept:

"Education becomes an act of depositing...Instead of communicating...students patiently receive, memorise and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But...it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation and knowledge in this (at best) misleading system. For apart from the inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human" (p.53).

In this environment, notions of constructive communication, dialogue or creative imagination can hardly be developed. School takes the form of a market place, where the students are the main consumers of a type of knowledge that is neither productive nor proactive and is certainly not developing free spirit citizens. Rather, knowledge can be characterised metaphorically as “dry-food” that students consume and which only gives them the means to purchase a ticket that will possibly allow them to excel in future exams in order to enter the university and save a place for the labour market. *Ekpaideusi* in Greece is mainly synonymous to achieving a place at the university. In this context, students’ voice and critical reasoning is difficult to embrace or develop in an environment that is teacher-centric and exams oriented. It seems that students’ voice and reasoning can be undermined or restricted mainly because students are not given the opportunity to develop their critical thinking through the pedagogical process around issues related to module-based concerns or general enquires. “Educational policy in Greece has not shown any significant interest in what students have to say about the way they are taught and their voices are not heard in matters of curriculum revision and discussions of pedagogy” (Mitsoni, 2006, p. 160). When, at the same time, the theoretical developments suggest that children should not only be seen as “becomings”, but as “beings”, whose experiences, ideas, choices and relationships are interesting in their own right” (Tangen, 2008, p. 157) and which are also considered essential in decision-making and potential policy formation (Norwich and Kelly, 2004; Messiou, 2002).

Moreover, democracy and pedagogy are constantly in the centre of the social and political activism, nowadays, its implementation does not seem to follow a truly ideological, communitarian and democratic path. In former years, the acquisition of knowledge and by extension of a degree, for the upper social class, was an indicator that confirmed their hegemonic position by their symbolic contribution to the intellectual culture and professional life. For the lower social classes, the acquisition of knowledge was synonymous to high social status and having a degree signified their ascent in the social and professional life. Although, asymmetries were evident, education was tied in with some ideological principles and was indeed certifying to those who had been educated access to professional life with the prospect to contribute to knowledge and society (Fotopoulos, 2009).

Nowadays, the societal inequalities are still evident, but on top of that, the acquisition of knowledge does not secure professional life and is certainly not aiming to intellectual development and contribution to knowledge. In modern Greece, having a degree is not enough and certainly is not an accomplishment. Our capitalistic society, which is trying to establish its place within the global world, is forcing students to learn at least one or two foreign languages, have a Masters or Doctorate degree and even that does not safeguard their professional recognition and progress. The regulations that govern the Greek market, both public and private, are based on beliefs like: “it is more important who you know than whom you are” or “it matters more who you claim to be than who you actually are”. And there are examples of people gaining Doctorate degrees within a year or people who are becoming lecturers or even being called academic professionals in Greek universities without having the necessary qualifications but they do have the essential connections (Fotopoulos, 2009). These are some of the examples that can signify the country’s deficient character or corrupted practice nowadays.

Nonetheless, in a school that is lacking in opportunities for students to develop and express their own thoughts and reveal their personality and talents, there is every likelihood that students will lose interest and passion for school-type learning and knowledge or look for alternative ways to express themselves and find answers to their questions. Lack of respect and trust to the country’s democratic, cultural and societal institutions, as well as, absence in setting norms of pragmatism and self-governance might be one of the main reasons that most initiatives or intended actions remain rhetoric rather than, actualised deeds.

The contemporary reality in Greece is built on notions of personal gain instead of eudemonia; which according to Democritus presupposes liberty of mind and eupsychia (‘good psyche’ or ‘wellbeing’ in Greek). The educational system is structured in such a way that produces “manufactured civilians” instead of “self-government citizens”. The spirit of *paideia* that was about the education of *arete*, liberty, decency, courage, scrupulousness and a life of prosperity and not about the training of mechanical tasks has been lost to a large degree. In its place there is the “banking” concept and striving for employability (even that aspect in not well planned and organised given the high rates of unemployment and the

inequalities in labour domain) by the promotion and expansion of concepts like: capitalism, industrialisation and globalism (Milopoulos, 2009).

Therefore, in the race for global capitalism, education focuses on what a student is lacking (instead of what the student is capable of), in order to develop the methods and intervention approaches to “fix” a given problem or “cover” a need; where the long-term goal and intention is to produce employable and multi-skilled students: the “global-students”. In this world, for many students, the pursuit of multi-skilled/student-citizens, is at risk of “affording them second-class status by instructing them outside the dominant system” (Zollers et al., 1999, p.158), when they cannot comply with the current demands of contemporary education. In other words, people who cannot “produce”, as promptly as others, are deemed to be inoperable in society. As Zola (1982) wrote, “being different means being less” (in Reynolds et al, 2005, p. 235-237). In this sense, human capital is what drives society and education instead of human personhood. With this disproportionateness being evident in Greek society, a discourse on inclusion, equal opportunities, occupational rehabilitation and the implementation of inclusion sounds like an imaginary vision.

Inclusion

Inclusion is a wide concept that has been defined as the process of educating both students with and without SEN in mainstream schools by providing to those who need additional support and services (Zollers et al., 1999). Inclusion is certainly a well-debated discourse. However, it seems that it has reached that point where “inclusion has become too broad and all-encompassing to be useful and meaningful” (Norwich, 2007, p.84). For that reason, there is a need for greater lucidity and clarity of the term, as well as, for clarification of the theoretical, ideological, philosophical foundation and the values that influence and govern inclusion (Farrell, 2004; Norwich, 2007). Therefore, before embarking with the analysis of the Greek inclusive system, it is necessary to define and briefly discuss inclusion. The process of inclusion and its concept has generated a great deal of discussions and disagreement amongst governments, politicians, scholars and practitioners. The complicated meaning and multi-tasked character

of inclusion has brought uncertainty regarding its definition, as well as, its policy, implementation and practice.

However, to attempt to define what inclusion is or what inclusion stands for is like “defining what is unknown in terms of something equally unknown” (Farrell, 2004, p.11). Accordingly, instead of defining inclusion it is better to understand its two main features: its theory/concept and its practice; which are considered to be very distinct. The process of inclusion as a theory and a concept is related to notions of pedagogy, justice, equality, belonging, participation, and children’s rights. It refers to the mutual respect and appreciation that should be built among students and among students and teachers within the school. Moreover, it refers to notions of democratic development by increasing levels of students’ participation, presence, acceptance and belonging in the school community and culture. It is a concept that is not merely located within disability but it “is concerned with reducing all exclusionary pressures, and all devaluations of students whether on the basis of disability, attainment, race, gender, class, family, life-style or sexuality” (Booth et al., 1997, p. 338). Inclusion as a practice has to deal with accommodation, educational models, methods and approaches, policy formation and management, teacher-student relationship, establishment of parents’ partnerships, human and material resources, statements and funding. Yet, the use of a single term in so many settings, it is indicative of its semantic complexity, which allows various interpretations and disagreement that may possibly move its discourse away from its initial scope: students’ actual affairs. Due to that, students’ affairs may be obscured, underrepresented and placed in a context where their choices, opportunities and views may be misunderstood or even denied. Therefore, students may find themselves feeling either excluded in a theoretical inclusive context or included in a theoretical perceived exclusive setting. In addition, a question to be raised is whether such a multidimensional term can eventually achieve balance between rhetoric and reality, theory and practice, needs and opportunities, actualisation of its ideal or constant effort to understand it and achieve its practical implementation.

As a concept, inclusion emphasises and pinpoints to all the main qualities that a school ought to acknowledge as a vehicle of culture and pedagogy. As a practice, though, (based on the above notions) inclusion reveals many contradictions and

implications in its implementation for both students and practitioners. As Dewey (1938) has heretofore uttered, “mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of Either-Ors, between which it recognises no intermediate possibilities. When forced to recognise that the extremes cannot be acted upon, it is still inclined to hold that they are all right in theory but when it comes to practical matters circumstances compel us to compromise. Educational philosophy is no exception” (p. 17).

Inclusion in Greece

Until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th provision for disabled people was characterised by notions of philanthropy and sympathy, where children were mainly located in segregated environments (Zoniou-Sideri, 1998). The institutional practices promoted by the political parties, in the course of the years, were based on notions and feelings of fear about the potential danger to the society of the particular group of individuals. Their aim was to “morally correct” the deviant children and normalise them, hoping for them to become active members of the industrial society (Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideri, 2000). Parents with disabled children often felt not only helpless but ashamed, and prevented their children from participating in normal life activities; keeping them behind the closed doors of their homes and segregated environments: isolated asylums, residential homes and institutions. Parents’ behaviour seems to be (and in many cases is) the outcome of the general discriminatory attitudes and perceptions that society has held towards disability. In addition, the absence of state provision, along with the denial that disabled children are equal members of the society are both contributing factors to the development of the concept or the term “other” (Zoniou-Sideri, 2006). This practice reinforces the social “disregard” and exclusive behaviour that society holds.

A significant change in perception and attitudes only become apparent at the beginning of the 21st century, where inclusion had been put forward based on principles of human rights, equal opportunities, mainstream education, participation, resources and staff specialisation. Historically, in the UK, the

discourse of 'exclusion' and 'segregation' followed the discourse of 'normalisation' and more recently the discourse of 'inclusion' (Armstrong, 2003). In Greece the discourse around special education followed a different direction. The introduction of the most recent laws in special education triggered the discourse of 'inclusion' that stimulated the discourses around 'exclusion' 'segregation' and 'normalisation'. Although, notions of segregation, exclusion and prejudice have a long history in Greece, these seemed to have only become visible and subject to transformation with the introduction of the recent legislations. As a result, 'integration', 'inclusion', students' rights and equal opportunities have gained ground in political and social discourses (Padeliadou, 2005). It is evident, though, that these complex notions surrounding 'inclusion' have created confusion, conflict and contradictory policies. As Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideri (2000) argue that "the confusion surrounding the area of special education has been partly the result of adopting uncritically concepts and practices that have been implemented and criticised in other countries" (p.34). Incorporating two educational systems by mainly assimilating complex notions that have been "superficially" adopted and imposed from other countries is deemed to fail. In addition, the risk for the Greek modern society in its endeavour to operate globally, without initially having a concrete educational ideology, is that it may initially override, undermine and finally lose its local and cultural identity

Moreover, the confusion in relation to inclusive education was the outcome of the speed in which special education was expanded and established over the last decades (Zoniou-Sideri, 2006), that did not create the conditions needed to implement inclusive policies and attitudes based on educational restructure. In addition, inclusive education was developed in a context that ignored instead of considering and reforming the social, pedagogical and political issues-prejudice, anachronistic pedagogical methods and attitudes and deficient infrastructure (Zoniou-Sideri, 2000).

Another significant aspect regarding 'inclusion' (in Greece) is the fact that in various European countries, inclusion was mainly the outcome of the 'battles' of the voluntary organisations and parents contesting the rights of children with special educational needs. In Greece, inclusion was not the outcome of "families' voices". Parents and voluntary organisations did not act as "pressure agencies in

facilitating change...due to the strong influence of the medical model that promotes a clinical approach to issues of special education” (Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideri, 2000, p.40). Inclusion was the result of the creation of a legislative framework aiming to balance the educational strategies in Greece with those of the European and Western countries.

Section three: SEN policy review of the SEN Laws 2817 and 3699

In this section a brief history of the SEN laws since the latest Constitution of Democracy in 1975 will be presented. A more detailed overview of the Law 2817 follows, while the Law 3699 is briefly presented and will be further explored in Chapter four as part of the documents’ analysis.

Linking the evolution of SEN laws in relation to policy

The highly centralised Greek educational system is characterised by its bureaucratic structure and low levels of public expenditure in comparison to other countries. There is a strict state control over policy formation and the means to its implementation, funding, instructive methods, national curriculum, examination system, timetable, content of school textbooks and staff appointment (Georgiadis, 2005). The declarations of human rights and the Greek Constitution of 1975 established free and mandatory education for all children. More precisely, and according to the Constitution of 1975:

“*Paideia* is the basic mission of the state, aiming at the moral, spiritual, professional and physical education of the Greeks...and their fulfilment as free responsible citizens...All Greeks have the right to a free education at all levels in state school. The state shall support distinguishing students and those deserving of assistance or special care, according to their abilities” (1975 Constitution, as cited in Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideri, 2000, p.29).

This declaration required the stakeholders to adopt and promote a more comprehensive approach to education where emphasis was also given to SEN provision. Therefore, various changes have been attempted since then. The aim has been to reform and democratise the educational system and remove the negative and exclusionary assumptions practitioners, parents and students held in order to provide an educational framework accessible to all students.

In this context, at the beginning of the 80s the Law 1143 was the first solid law regarding special education. The law acknowledged and necessitated the establishment of provision for 'disabled' students. Special schools and SCs were formed within the mainstream for the 'deviant people' (as defined by the law). According to Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideri (2000), this term was especially anachronistic and offensive, did not embrace the individual. Instead, it acknowledged their 'difficulties' by placing students in certain categories and providing support based on the severity of their needs, mainly in special schools. Although, the Law was criticised for inequalities and misconceptions, it should be acknowledged, that it was the first law that legitimised education for students with SEN in the mainstream settings. However, the stipulations of the particular law were never fully implemented due to a change in government the same year (Vlachou, 2006).

In 1985 the Greek Parliament voted through for the first time in Greece a Law for the General Education that had a separate chapter for special education. Undoubtedly, Law 1566 was an innovation for the Greek reality that kept children with SEN on the fringe of society even at legislative level. The Law introduced a nationally-accepted term, students with 'special needs' instead of possibly stigmatising terms like 'abnormal', 'retarded' or 'mongol' (Zoniou-Sideri, 2006). In addition, SEN SAs were introduced and the University of Speech Therapy was established (EADSEN, 2005). However, the reforms of the particular Law were not followed by reforms in infrastructure and educational ideology. SCs were mainly located in primary schools in the urban areas of Greece, while provision at secondary level was limited to non-existent in rural areas. Students with SEN entered the secondary school without their needs being either met or secured. In this context, students were struggling to meet the demands of the strict curriculum and succeed in the school exams. Many students were failing while others were "forced" to leave school (Vlachou, 2006). Most school staff had limited training

and education regarding SEN. It is indicative that, although, the first Law of special education was introduced in 1981, the first University in Greece with a dedicated department in special education for primary teachers first operated in 1998. The basic requirement for teachers' appointment in either special schools or SCs was their 'sensitivity and commitment to work with students with SEN'. This decision can be perceived as noble; but, at the same time, teachers in special settings were given more benefits than regular teachers - better salaries and flexible timetables (Delli-Syriopoulou, 2003). On the next page, Figure 1, describes in a top-down order the distribution of power and services based on the Law 2817.

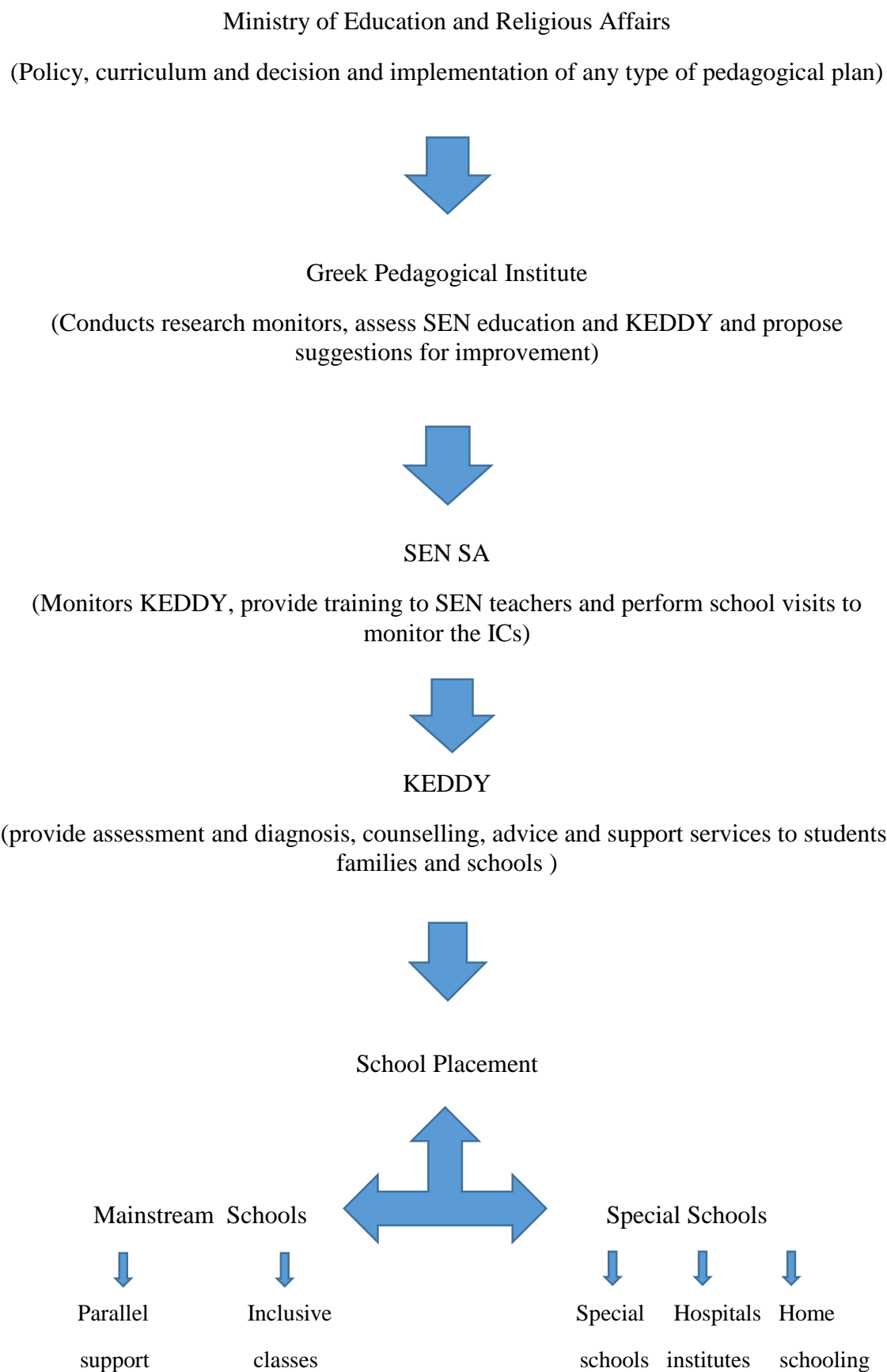


Figure 1: Diagram of the Greek SEN educational system/Law 2817.

Law 2817/2000

The inability of the Greek system to effectively respond to the needs of students led to a range of reforms. Within this context, the law 2817 in 2000 was introduced to promote inclusion and a “School for All” (Delli-Syriopoulou, 2003). Up until today, this law has been the most elaborated law regarding special education. At the same time, it was situated within special education. This law was not incorporated within the law for general education, but was a distinct Law for students with SEN, without any explanation for this distinction (special versus general). This law is considered significant as the most recent law for special education (Law 3699, 2008) was based on Law 2817. Therefore, a careful analysis of this law is considered important in order to identify the changes in the stipulations of the current Law 3699 in 2008.

Within this Law the terminology changed again and children with ‘special needs’ are now defined as children with ‘special educational needs’; a term that complied with the international terminology, around SEN, at that time. SCs are renamed as ICs. Inclusion is promoted and the Law states that all children should be educated in mainstream schools, unless the type and severity of their difficulties do not make this possible. According to the Law, ‘Students with special educational needs are those who are experiencing significant learning and adaptation difficulties due to physical, mental, psychological, emotional and social needs’ (EADSEN, 2005). Under the regulations of the particular Law pupils who are considered as SEN are classified into the following categories:

- a) mental retardation
- b) severe visual or hearing impairment
- c) severe neurological or orthopaedic impairment or severe health problems
- d) speech and communication difficulties
- e) special learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia
- f) severe cognitive, emotional and social difficulties, autism and developmental disorders

Pupils whose first language is not Greek are not considered as students with SEN. The diagnosis and assessment of students in the above categories lies with the Diagnostic Assessment and Support Centres (KDAYs), (Law 2817).

Categories

Before continuing with the analysis of the legislation it is important to briefly comment on the Greek categorical system. Although, categories of SEN were part of the legislative document, the policy-makers did not provide any information regarding their administrative purpose. The legislation did not clearly state the type of provision and intervention that aimed to offer to students in each category. It did not determine whether the identification of a student in a particular category, as well as, the level of difficulty would affect what will be offered to a child. In addition, it did not explain whether provision and funds were allocated based on categories or the child's individual needs and personal characteristics and whether the intervention and provision was based on case-by-case criteria in the actual school context. The exact criteria for diagnosis (academic criteria, intellectual functioning or social competence) were not specified. Last but not least, the eligibility of all students to professional support and specialised staff was not included, as well as, the criteria for that decision. An added important issue that should have been explained and questioned is how the categories apply in education, and whether they can facilitate educators' work and students' learning. There are also social aspects to categorisation, in the view of "the ways in which the society assigns individuals to categories and, on the basis, determines whom to exclude from political, social and economic activities" (Minow, 1990, as cited in Norwich, 2008, p.9). Xiromeri-Tsalaganou (1984) states: 'Which other Law of education separates the Greek schoolchildren in categories that determine their abilities and rights? How can we not be ashamed when we determine who 'deviates from normal' and dogmatically state that we know the definition of 'normal'? (in Zoniou-Sideri, 2004). These points are essential in determining how a country plans its educational and provisional system.

Aims and additional measures

The particular Law was aiming towards a) the development of the pupils' personality, b) improving their abilities and skills as to fully include them in the mainstream and successfully integrate them into society, c) providing vocational training to involve them in the productivity process and d) achieving their acceptance from society as equal members. To accomplish these aims, a number of a) measures and b) services are provided including: a) Planning and implementation of special programmes and didactic methods, educational material, devices, equipment and other facilitative and ergonomic arrangement, b) Diagnosis, assessment, pedagogical and psychological support, speech therapy, physiotherapy, counselling and transportation. (paragraph 7, article 1, Law 2817).

A series of additional measures are administered for pupils with SEN that regulate various educational issues. New positions in special education were created, including: music-therapists, interpreters of sign language and mobility trainers for blind students. Moreover, KDAYs were established (the operation of KDAYs was assessed every two years from the GPI), within the GPI² a department for SEN was established and IEP became statutory once a child was identified as having SEN. More resources were provided to schools to accommodate the needs of their students. The Greek sign language is recognised as the 'Language of the deaf' (Zoniou-Sideri, 2004; EADSEN, 2005).

Protection of students' rights

According to the Law 2817 the rights of students with SEN were defined and guaranteed by presidential decrees and ministerial acts. Students with SEN have

² The duties and responsibilities of SEN GPI ARE:

- 1) The planning and support for the development of training programmes for the SEN teachers at all levels of special education.
- 2) The planning and development of the curriculum and timetable for the education of students with SEN.
- 3) The assessment of the educational programmes in special education.
- 5) Support the SEN SAs and the educational programmes for SEN.
- 6) Collaborate with academic agencies within the country and abroad to promote SEN.
- 7) Assess KDAY's operation every 2 years.

the constitutional right to free and public education; free supportive services for medical provision, therapeutic services, diagnosis, assessment, IEP planning, courses to acquire Braille and Greek sign language, public assistance, accessibility to public transportation, vocational rehabilitation and legal support to students with SEN and their families. (EADSEN, 2005).

KDAY

The responsibility to implement the stipulations of the law by recommending provision and intervention to accommodate students' needs was promoted to the jurisdiction of KDAYs. Those centres were responsible for diagnosis, assessment, counselling, appointing personnel, choice of school and providing resources to schools. It is important to set out the responsibilities of KDAYs since these were the main authority opting to implement the features of Law 2817. KDAY, according to the Law, had the following responsibilities:

- diagnosis and assessment for children of both pre-school and school age
- planning of the IEPs of the pupils assessed
- recommendation of appropriate school (mainstream, integration educational setting or special school)
- planning special programmes, didactic methods and taking other supportive actions for children with SEN
- provision of counselling support and raising the awareness of school staff regarding SEN
- providing the required resources to schools
- offering seminars and workshops to school staff
- replacing written exams with oral exams for students with SEN

The centres were aiming to provide their services to all the educational levels to support pupils with SEN by providing early intervention, IEPs planning and

appropriate didactic programmes in order to assure the effectiveness of the inclusive settings (Delli-Syriopoulou, 2003; EADSEN, 2005).

The process of identification

The identification and assessment process is made by a team of professionals, in various disciplines (doctors, educators, psychologists and social workers). This process takes place in three sessions. Parents need to submit their child's medical history to eliminate all possibility of visual and hearing impairments. A battery of tests is then administered. An IQ (intelligence quotient) test is administered to measure the child's verbal and non-verbal abilities. The test will indicate the child's school performance and abilities. However, the use of the particular tests is very controversial in other countries. While in Greece they are used widely, without being questioned about their effectiveness in determining quality interventions and provision that reflects and is relevant to the child's actual needs. As Sternberg (1996) states, "We need to be much more cautious than we have been in trumpeting as truths our views on the nature of intelligence" (p.11).

After administering the IQ test, additional tests are administered to measure reading, writing, spelling, comprehension, narrative skills and mathematic ability. In addition, the child's receptive and expressive language abilities are assessed, as well as, the ability to make sound/symbol associations. When the evaluation process is completed, a team meeting takes place to determine the type and level of the 'educational difficulty'. If the child is identified as having an 'additional difficulty', KDAYs then suggest recommendations for specific intervention strategies. In addition, KDAYs plan the IEPs and propose the student's placement, based on the assessment, in the appropriate educational setting. Parents who disagree with the outcome of the assessment have the right, according to the Presidential Decree (2007), to appeal to the Special Diagnostic Evaluation Committee (Bakali, 2007). Nonetheless, there is no official evidence and evaluation reports (according to literature review) of the particular Committees' operation. A point of worry is that the Committees are established under the local HT's liabilities whose decisions might be taken under antiquated ideas and prejudice (Skordilis, 2006).

Placement: Mainstream school

The placement of students with SEN is suggested by the KDAY after assessment has been completed with the collaboration of the medical practices. According to the Law, schools should be staffed and organised in such a way to provide students with SEN appropriate provision, didactic and educational support within the mainstream (paragraph 11, article 1, Law 2817). Students with SEN who require systematic support to respond to the demands of the curriculum attend the IC or the mainstream class with support from a SEN teacher (this model is called *parallel support*). Their placement is suggested when their difficulties 'are not severe', to prevent them from following the curriculum and with the assumption that a SEN teacher will be supporting them. A student is also referred to the mainstream when a special school is not accessible in their particular region (EADSEN, 2005). (A description of ICs has been provided in p. 21).

Placement: Special schools

KDAYs, suggest the placement of students' in special schools when their learning in mainstream schools is not possible due to the type and level of their difficulties. In this case, students may attend: primary special school, secondary special school, vocational training school, schools in hospitals, rehabilitation centres and home-based schooling provided by the KDAY (paragraph 12, article 1, Law 2817).

Teachers' training

The Law 2817 certifies that all public schools should be represented by special teachers in all educational levels (nursery, primary and secondary). Nursery and primary teachers complete a four-year degree in education that includes both theoretical and practical courses (EADSEN, 2005). There are also a few introductory courses in special education. However, their theoretical approach follows the medical model with emphasis on the pathology and the characteristics of students with SEN. Moreover, 76% of these courses are not compulsory

(Padeliadou, 2005). Nursery and primary teachers can be qualified as special educators following a two-year in-service programme (EADSEN, 2005). Only in the University of Thessaly is there an autonomous department of Special Education, initially operated in 1998, that educates SEN teachers for pre-school and primary education. The first special nursery and primary SEN teachers graduated in 2002-2003 while the Law was introduced in 2000. This controversy shows that the Law was formulated without proper planning and can be better characterised as work-in-progress with certain assumptions for future implementation.

Training in secondary education is even less systematic and organised. Secondary teachers follow a four-year degree according to their discipline (mathematics, philology, science, etc). Most of these programmes do not offer educational and training courses in special education. Secondary teachers can become SEN teachers by participating in postgraduate degrees (with a restricted number of admissions) run by the Pedagogical Universities in primary education or receive brief seminars in special education (EADSEN, 2005). The inequalities at organisation level, to provide quality education and training to Greek teachers with coherent and differentiated didactic methods, leads to the formation of an 'inclusive system' where through the secondary education no help is provided and parents are forced to seek expensive private tuition in order to give their children a better chance in tackling the demanding secondary curriculum" (Vlachou, 2006, p.43).

Overall understandings regarding Law 2817

The main elements of this Law could be summarised in the following: a) Changes in terminology: SCs are renamed to ICs and students with "special needs" are redefined as students with "special educational needs", b) All students are educated in mainstream unless the type and severity of their difficulties do not make it possible, d) Categories are reduced to six and students' placement and provision is determined based on these categories, d) KDAY are established to assess students, recommend placement and plan students' IEPs (FEK, 2000).

A number of questions emerge and several omissions are evident in this particular Law. Firstly, it is unclear how the specific aims will be accomplished. A number of services are stated in the legislative document that are responsible for establishing the aims. However, the actual means and actions to carry out these aims are not included. Moreover, it is not stated whether these aims are long-term or short-term, as well as, the current situation in Greece regarding SEN. Secondly, what will be the exact role of employees in these services? Thirdly, who will monitor and evaluate the services? Finally, how will funds be allocated to students? These are vital points that should be stated to understand how inclusion operates in Greece.

KDAY

In reality KDAYs were faced with a variety of issues that created obstacles to their effectiveness. These problems were mainly related to KDAY' infrastructure. The Law established 54 KDAYs allocated in the urban and rural areas of Greece. The specialised team that supported 41 out of the 54 KDAYs was: a primary SEN teacher, a secondary SEN teacher, one to three psychologists (depending on the prefecture) and one to three social workers (depending on the prefecture). In the remaining 11 KDAYs there were additional staff including: a SEN nursery teacher, a speech therapist, a physiotherapist and child psychologist. Finally, in both the capital and the co-capital cities there were also two teachers for the deaf, two for the blind, two mobility teachers for the blind and two sign language teachers (paragraph 4, article 2, Law 2817). According to these numbers, there was only one psychologist for almost three thousand students in most areas of Greece (Dede, 2008).

In addition, the shortages in specialised staff, revealed the lack of a comprehensive epistemic orientation regarding SEN to provide combined and coordinated provision to a common problem and offer a case by case solution. Moreover, lack of scientific research (based on literature review) about the practical operation of KDAY limits the understanding about the various issues that may cause its ineffectiveness. According to Padelidou (2005), only 30% of

educators working in special educational settings have been qualified as 'SEN teachers'.

Placement: IC

In cases when neither a SEN teacher nor a special school is available in the student's region, according to the Law, a regular teacher is appointed to support students' learning. According to Vlachou (2006), in most cases, students are placed in regular classes with no assistance struggling to cope with the demands of the school which are highly intense for all students. The term "not severe difficulties" requires further clarification regarding the criteria that indicate the severity of a difficulty as well as the responsibilities of the SEN teacher and the means to provide support to students. Do mainstream schools have the appropriate resources to accommodate the needs of a student who should be educated in special schools? In mainstream schools, blind students do not have access to textbooks, notes and other supportive materials and devices to facilitate their learning. In 2003 (two years after the implementation of the Law) the Government promised to supply schools with electronic computers for blind students to accommodate their needs and in 2005 most of the schools had not been supplied with the appropriate resources (Vergou, 2005).

Moreover, in many rural areas, though, mainstream schools operate with less than 15 students. The legislation does not specify the arrangements that will be made to support the learning of students in rural areas or in schools where less than three students are identified with SEN.

Although the legislation makes clear that ICs should operate, with all the necessary and proper infrastructures to accommodate the students' needs, their structure and operation is to some extent unclear due to lack of research data (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005). In addition, there are cases that after the pressure of General Class Teachers (GCTs), students whose first language is not Greek may attend ICs although the Law specifies that students whose first language is not Greek cannot be classified as students with SEN (Vlachou, 2006). Moreover, the ICs that accommodate students with SEN are located in unsuitable rooms with limited lighting. The survey conducted by the GPI indicated that seven out of the

10 ICs are located in storage rooms, basements, corridors and in many cases are not accessible to students with physical difficulties (Haralampakis, 2005; Padeliadou 2005). According to Vlachou (2006), students are 'forced' to participate in the GC due to the limited facilities in the IC. Moreover, due to the overload of the KDAYs, the decision for students' admission in inclusive settings, in some cases, is promoted to school staff. This is not an official and certified decision given the fact that numerous mainstream schools operate with de-skilled personnel due to shortages in human resources. In this context, their decisions are primarily taken based on school performance (without taking other factors into consideration) (Zoniou-Sideri, 2004a/2004b; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005). The above, highlights once again the tension between legislation and its implementation that shows the 'failure' of the educational system to produce and promote a framework in which inclusive practices and quality provision for students with SEN are embraced.

Placement: Special schools

The Law 2817 signifies that special schools will implement didactic practices by using adaptive and differentiated educational methods and a curriculum provided by specialised staff (paragraph 16, article 1, Law 2817). However, their administrative, educational programmes and the staff qualifications are similar to those of regular schools (Padeliadou, 2005; Zoniou-Sideri, 2004). It still remains unclear (due to limited research and evaluation reports) the conditions under which the special schools operate, their effectiveness and the type and the number of students that they accommodate. In 1995, the Government announced the establishment of six special schools and units for autistic children in the south part of Greece (which leaves the north area unaided). In 2008, only three special schools for autistic children have been established that do not function properly due to shortcomings in human resources (Skordilis, 2008). These controversies do not justify the promises for inclusive education and quality provision.

Moreover, with regards to the Law about accessibility to school settings, the majority of schools do not offer proper infrastructure to accommodate the needs of students with physical and mobility difficulties. It is fair, though, to indicate that

the state has provided the needed substructure to a number of schools. However, this is restricted to the urban areas of the country and the same example should be followed to all areas (Papanastasouli, 2005). How do these arrangements establish the constitutional right to education and provision? It is essential for the state to take action to secure students' constitutional and legislative right to education and equal opportunities. Lack of a continuum in statistical data, evaluation reports, infrastructure, political commitment and social sensitivity indicates the states' inability to respond to the students' needs effectively, where the notion of 'inclusive educational practice' remains rhetoric.

Overall, the aim of the particular Law was to produce a more inclusive legislative document that would certify SEN students' rights and placement in mainstream. Though, the formation of the document revealed a number of omissions that were crucial for its effective implementation. One of the main omissions was that the policy-makers did not give any justification for the reduction and maintenance of the categories. The specific criteria for a child being identified in any of these categories were not provided nor did the exact means to support their learning. Categories were mainly used to allocate students in the various educational settings: special school or IC. Yet again, the function and practice of the particular educational settings was to some extent unclear, in terms of, the specific duties of SEN teachers and GCTs or the exact resources and facilities that were provided to teachers to accommodate their students' needs. In addition, many of the inequalities identified in previous practices were still evident regarding the changes in legislation.

Law 3699

The Law 3699 is the latest attempt to balance some of the inequalities that were evident in the previous SEN laws. The Law 3699 withdraws the articles 1 to 5 of the Law 2817 on the basis that their context contradicts the current Law. However, a careful analysis of both the Law 3699 and the Law 2817, does not reveal many critical alterations. On the contrary, the articles were theoretically withdrawn, but, in reality most parts remained the same with few parts being revised or updated for accuracy. Before presenting in detail the amendments in

the stipulations of the Law, new the changes in terminology will be briefly discussed.

As it was mentioned above, the terminology is changing again. The Law is dividing students in two categories: Disabled students and students with SEN. Moreover, it is stated that the term 'special education' will be replaced by the term 'special education and learning'³. The diagnostic centres (KDAY) are now called KEDDY. However, no explanations have been provided regarding the purpose or the necessity of renaming of the KDAYs. One can only assume that the policy-makers were aiming to improve the quality of practices or notions by renaming particular settings. However, this can only become plausible by altering the quality of the existing practices by actual acts and not by changes in terminology. On the next page, Figure 2, describes in a top-down order the distribution of power and services based on the Law 3699.

³ The exact term used by in the policy document is 'Special *Agogi* and Education'. The word *agogi* will be explained in the discussion chapter. For the purposes of this thesis and to avoid confusion, when referring to 'Special *Agogi* and Education' the terms 'special education' or 'SEN support' will be used instead.

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs
(Policy, curriculum and decision and implementation of any type of pedagogical plan)



Greek Pedagogical Institute
(Conducts research monitors, assess SEN education and KEDDY and propose suggestions for improvement)



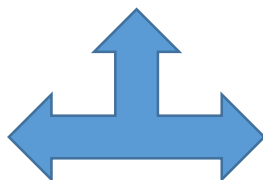
SEN SA
(Monitors KEDDY, provide training to SEN teachers and perform school visits to monitor the ICs)



KEDDY
(provide assessment and diagnosis, counselling, advice and support services to students, families and schools)



School Placement



Mainstream Schools

Special Schools

↓
Parallel
support

↓
Inclusive
classes

↓
Special
schools

↓
Hospitals
institutes

↓
Home
schooling

Figure 2: Diagram of the Greek SEN educational system/Law 3699.

Changes in the stipulation of the Law 3699 compared to Law 2817

The Laws 2817 and 3699 were compared by the writer for similarities, differences and omissions aiming to identify whether the documents were well articulated and applicable in practice. Article 1 of Law 3699 refers to the aims and notions of SEN but is more detailed compared to Law 2817. **More precisely**, special education is defined as the group of services that are provided to students with SEN. The government is committed to 1) constantly upgrade the character of special education, 2) provide free public SEN services and 3) safeguard all citizens' right to equal opportunities in order to participate as equal members in the society.

Article 2 refers to the organisation and aims of special education, which in Law 2817 was incorporated in article 1. More precisely, it is stated that special education similar to general education is mandatory and an interrelated part of general public education that is provided by the state. The educational services of special education include: medical assessment, assessment, diagnosis, statement and continuous specialised programmes and provision that are provided and implemented by the local KEDDY of every county (these stipulations have also been introduced also in Law 2817). The aims of special education are to support 1) the development of students' personality, 2) the development of their skills and abilities in order to be included in the general school, 3) their inclusion within the educational system, social life and professional life, 4) their acceptance by the society and establishment of equal opportunities and access in public life by providing appropriate infrastructure and technological resources. These aims are accomplished by 1) early assessment, 2) diagnosis and assessment of SEN in KEDDY, 3) systematic provision from early years and 4) the implementation of special educational programmes, rehabilitation programmes, differentiating the curriculum, electronic and general resources that are provided by the KEDDY. These aims are very similar to the aims described in Law 2817. An innovation of the particular Law is that for the first time, it recognises the involvement of the National Association of People with Disabilities. They were invited to participate in the National Committee of Education to monitor the infrastructure and the accessibility in electronic

resources of the education material. The Deputy of the National Association of People with Disabilities in 2013 stated that the funding has significantly reduced (70% reduction) and parents are forced to create PI for the vocational education of their children. Given that the state does not provide the necessary provision and buildings to support the children, they will eventually be institutionalised in psychiatric clinics (Varvakastanis, 2013). In the same paper the deputy of the Association of Parents with Children with SEN states that although the Law 3699 specifies that free and public education will be provided to disabled people, students, parents and teachers are still being marginalised. There are tremendous insufficiencies in infrastructure and resources. Every year new SEN teachers are appointed one to two months after the beginning of the school year which restrains the progress of students (Sarantidis, 2013). Within this context it is questionable whether the decision to involve the Association was a political decision to calm the public disappointment or whether the decision was noble.

Article 3 refers to categories of SEN. The categorical system that classifies and defines the pupils that will receive additional support due to their learning difficulties does not follow the previous format of alphabetical classification (Law 2817, article 1). In article 3 of Law 3699 the categorical system of needs is written in a more 'narrative' description. Even though letters or numbers have been avoided to outline the specific categories of needs, those categories still exist and the students are still assessed based on the specific categories that have been ascertained by the policy makers. The rationale for the choice of presenting the needs of the students following a different layout is not clear, as the language remains the same. However, an interesting aspect of the particular legislation is that the number of categories has increased and are now more specific in indicating the set of needs that "qualifies" students as having SEN (again, no justification was given for this decision to increase the number of categories).

More precisely and based on KEDDY's assessment, students with disabilities and SEN are considered those who for some or most part of their school lives present difficulties due to mental, cognitive, development, psychological and neuropsychological disorders, which interfere with their educational progress. Disabled students and students with SEN are considered those who experience mental retardation, visual impairments, sensory impairments, kinetic impairments, chronic diseases, speech and language problems, specific learning

difficulties (including: dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dysanagnosia, dysorthographia), attention deficit disorders, attention deficit hyperactive disorders, autistic spectrum disorders (autism was not included in the previous Law), psychological disorders and multiple disorders. In addition, in paragraph 2 and 3 of article 3, it is stated that children at risk of crime, neglected or abused children, as well as gifted and talented students are considered as SEN. This particular appendage can be seen as a positive step in acknowledging a wider range of needs and providing welfare to all students. However, it is worrying that within the document there is no detailed explanation of how and by which means provision (apart from locational arrangements) will be available or the particular actions that will be taken by personnel to cater for this group of students. The Law remains quite simplistic in terms of defining the categories of need and not providing the necessary information regarding the means that will be used to facilitate students' needs. Stating that continuous provision and specialised educational programmes will be available does not inform practice.

Moreover, there is a very critical point in article 3 of the particular Law regarding the way that inclusive education has been planned operates within the Greek educational context. In this article, it is stated that students will only be considered as SEN after diagnosis has provided by the Diagnostic Centres. However, many students do require additional support but their needs are not severe enough to meet KEDDY's diagnostic criteria for a statement. The crucial question is what will be the future of students who cannot obtain a diagnosis from these Centres? In Greece there is no school action or school action plus. In those cases, that students require additional support but do not have a statement, there is no specific and planned school or state provision that can be applicable to the majority of the students. There are no teaching assistants within the GCs and students are usually struggling to cope with the school demands without the necessary assistance. To be accurate, in article 6 (paragraph, c/2) there is mention that students without diagnosis can attend ICs, upon the SEN SA's agreement. This raises issues regarding the role and the availability of the SEN SA in the educational settings and also about the type of provision for students without statements—for instance, IEPs are carried out by the KEDDY. If the SEN SA is not available do the students still enter the IC and who decides the student's participation in the ICs? These are crucial issues that should be explained within

the policy document. Within this context, family is the main source that can accommodate for the child's needs which is usually accomplished by hiring private tutors or by sending their children to PI to support their learning. This was found to be the case in this study. Nonetheless, this has been described as an expensive choice that parents are forced to make since there is no appropriate provision by the state and once again the right to free education for all remains a myth within the Greek reality. These points will be further discussed in the following chapters.

Article 4 refers to KEDDY's operation. The Law 3699 follows a similar format to the Law 2817. The responsibilities of KEDDY in the first 7 paragraphs of article 4 are the same as in Law 2817. There are three extra responsibilities which include 1) to submit, at the end of the year, to the Ministry of Education and the GPI, a final report regarding their operation. Based on this report KEDDYs' work is assessed by the GPI (Based on Law 2817 KEDDYs' assessment was every two years), 2) to report possible insufficiencies in infrastructure, 3) to report all the individual cases of the students that are supported by the KEDDY and suggest current pedagogical approaches, supportive material and technological resources that can support the participation of the student in the general school. Specifying these additional responsibilities is encouraging. However, additional personnel based on the Law, have not been appointed. Given that KDAY have been overly busy due to shortages in personnel, it is questionable whether the personnel at KEDDY can deliver those additional responsibilities, when the waiting list for diagnosis can be in some cases from four months up to two years. In addition the article 12 outlines the counties where KEDDYs are established. The number of KEDDYs are now 60 compared to the 54 in Law 2817. However, the additional KEDDYs are all established in Athens (capital city of Greece) and Thessaloniki (co-capital city of Greece) although the other counties are also in need for more KEDDY or personnel.

Article 5 describes the process of diagnosis that follows the exact procedures as before. Furthermore, it is signified that parents' views can be included in the formation of IEP, however their opinions are not conclusive to the final planning of the IEP. This is an issue that raises questions about parents' rights and will be discussed later in the following chapters.

Article 6 refers to placement of students in the school setting (general/special). These stipulations were in article 1 in Law 2817. The adaptation that this Law includes is that students with minor SEN can be educated full-time in the GC and be supported by the GCT who cooperates with the KEDDY and SEN SAs of both general and special education. The Law does not offer more information regarding this cooperation (purposes and nature), how often this cooperation will take place or whether planning meetings should be scheduled for monitoring and support. Also, it does not refer to whether GCTs who have students with SEN in their classes should have training or the duties and their qualifications. The state does provide in a separate policy document the duties of the ICTs and HTs that will be discussed later in this chapter with regard to the study findings. The Law remains very generic. The participation of students with SEN is designed as following:

Within the mainstream

- 1) 'special *agogi* and education' is provided in the GC by the GCT in cooperation with the KEDDY and the SEN SAs of both special and general education
- 2) 'special *agogi* and education' is provided by the ICT, in the mainstream class with *parallel support* by the SEN teacher
- 3) 'special *agogi* and education' is provided in suitable and well-structured ICs with two distinct educational types of support: one-to-one or group support

In special schools and home

- 4) 'special *agogi* and education' is provided in special schools
- 5) 'special *agogi* and education' is provided in special schools or departments located or colocated with hospitals or institutes
- 6) home schooling (HS)

In article 6, it is also stated that the number of students in the GCs should be reduced when disabled students or students with SEN also attend the GCs. In addition each IC can accommodate maximum 12 students. There is no planning included in the Law of the cases when the number of students with SEN will exceed the 12 students. How will provision be planned? Another very important

aspect is that in article 6 (paragraph 1.a), it is specified that PS will be provided when in the county region there is no other form of SEN provision (special school or IC). Within this context, the only form of planned and professional SEN provision (SEN teacher: ICT) within the mainstream school is available in the IC.

The training of SEN teachers is another crucial element of the particular Law that has not been addressed adequately. More precisely, article 25 refers to SEN teachers' training and certifies that teachers should attend seminars to further their knowledge. However, there are no specific guidelines regarding the number of seminars that teachers must attend whether the seminars are compulsory, their duration, how often those seminars will be provided, their content, scope, character and the criteria on which seminars will be prepared and delivered. Would the seminars be based on pragmatic challenges that educators are faced with in everyday practice or would they include general knowledge on SEN issues? Would they be presented as lectures or would they have a more experiential character to engage educators in a more meaningful way in the process? In addition, many seminars that are for permanent teachers are not available to SEN teachers who have graduated from the University of Thessaly, mainly because those graduates can only work as temporary teachers and this status does not qualify them access to certain seminars provided by the Ministry. These are critical issues that need to be fully addressed and given the rapid changes in technologies and knowledge it is more than important for all teachers to be updated in order to improve or advance their practices.

The analysis of the two laws has not shown significant differences between the two policy documents. Law 3699 can be better described as a replica of the Law 2817. The document remains generic, important notions are not defined (for example inclusion), cooperation and the means to be achieved between staff and agencies is not stated, risk-assessment is not included, nor the funding for the effective operation of special education in Greek schools. At the same time, it seems that more responsibilities have been given to schools and the services of special education without appointing additional personnel. These conditions seem to make the policy document a rhetorical and political proclaim rather than a coherent praxis. The following chapter will present the methodology and the data analysis of the case study.

Chapter three: Methodology

This chapter aims to present the philosophical stances of this study, as well as, the methodological processes followed to collect and analyse the data.

Ontological, epistemological, theoretical perspective and methodological perspectives

Before elaborating on the presentation of methodological approach, it is important to clarify the ontological and epistemological assumptions as well as the theoretical perspective of the study, because the justification of choosing a certain methodology reaches into the philosophical assumptions researchers bring to work (Crotty, 2003). According to Crotty (2003) these elements are closely related and highly influenced in bidirectional means.

In terms of ontology, that is the study of *what is* (Crotty, 2003), the present study, as it is commonly encountered in social sciences, draws upon relativism, which contrarily to realism assumes that there is no independent reality existing externally to our consciousness and therefore, it stresses the importance of the personal interpretations applied to the world (Willig, 2001).

Relativist ontological assumptions are compatible with constructionist epistemological perspectives. The epistemology, that is the theory of knowledge (Crotty, 2003), of constructionism was chosen on the basis of being in line with the study's assumptions that people construct their personal interpretations of reality. Different people make different meanings even out of the same phenomenon (Crotty, 2003). Therefore, as constructionism claims there is no objective meaning, rather people make their own reality when they engage with the world (Miller and Brewer, 2003). As a result, different individuals may have completely different perceptions about the phenomenon of inclusive education or the reality of an IC. However, it should be mentioned that meaning is not exclusively subjective, because personal views are influenced by societal and

cultural constructs since the very beginning of life (Crotty, 2003). Thus, according to constructionism meaning is both personal and contextual, which in terms of research is interpreted as a need to view the researcher as part of the context. A major principle of constructionism is that deeper interpretation of the social world is enhanced when the researcher and the researched are not seen as distinct entities, but rather as interacting communicators (Miller and Brewer, 2003).

In terms of theoretical perspective, that is the philosophical standpoint informing the methodology (Crotty, 2003), the study drew upon interpretivist understandings because they are compatible with both constructionist epistemology and case study methodology. More specifically, interpretivism rejects the belief that human behavior is invariant, controlled and predictable; rather it highlights the personal interpretations of experience within their contexts (Cohen et al., 2007a). According to interpretivism it is important 'to understand from within' (Cohen et al., 2007a, p.21) and so the viewpoint of a detached, objective observer is abandoned. More flexible and participatory designs are preferred that give voice to the participants (Dialektaki and Thoma, 2009) and show respect for the person (Cohen et. al, 2007a). Finally, a central principle of interpretivism is that reality is flexible, multilayered, context-related and socially-determined (Mertens, 1998). In this sense, interpretivist theoretical perspective is well-matched with a case study methodology.

According to Nisbet and Watt (1984), case studies provide the basis for an in-depth investigation of an instance in action. Such an instance can be a community, a school, a class, a group or a single person (Robson, 1998). A case study can recognise the complexity of social truths and observe participants within their natural life contexts. In this study such context or instance was the IC of school A. In this study attention has been focused on all aspects of IC, from policy context to day-to-day operation. More precisely, the IC has been the outcome of the SEN policy within the Greek mainstream schools and ICs operate within an educational setting that consists of students, teachers, ICTs, external SEN staff and SEN support services. Therefore, this is an embedded case study where data collection and analysis took into consideration numerous aspects that surround the implementation and operation of ICs.

More specifically, the study was aiming to explore the nature and operation of the IC, what it means for the school personnel, the students and their parents to be part of this educational setting, whether the IC's operation was in accordance with the legislation and what could be changed or improved or promoted based on the data. Moreover, the aim was to produce new meanings and new understandings regarding inclusive education based initially on the data gathered in the IC and the analysis of the documents of focus (SEN policy laws). Therefore, the understandings from the policy documents were further explored while conducting the case study. The study took place in the IC of a mainstream school, based on the understanding of the individual interpretations and direct experiences that participants ascribe to their natural settings (Cohen et al., 2007a). To explore those understandings about the inclusive context in Greek mainstream schools by using qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis, the study was based on the principles of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The methods of the study, which have been employed to unfold phenomena and meanings, were based on GT's research tools for data collection and analysis because GT research tools were perceived to be the most appropriate approach to pursue the intentions of the study.

A central tenet in GT is that theory is emergent from data (Glaser, 1992) and cannot be predefined (Cohen et al., 2007a). It is an inductive process during which data pattern themselves instead of the researcher imposing patterns on them (Cohen et al., 2007a). Most importantly, though, GT rejects linear cause and effect understandings, advocating for the need to take under consideration the interconnectedness of elements and the complexity of everyday actions as well as the irregularities and contradictions (Glaser, 1992). This is perhaps why it is so appealing to researchers; because it conceives accurately the naturalistic element (what is going on) and it makes it systematic through systematic methods while aiming for the development of an emerging theory (Glaser, 1992).

Overall, case studies can contribute and provide insights in educational policy making, policy implementation, education, as well as, processes of change and adaptation (Yin, 2009). In Greece, theories regarding special education and the operation of ICs are not as developed as in other European and Western countries and up till now, as far as I am aware, there has been no previous qualitative study employing an exploratory case study methodology with GT

methods, in Greece, in relation to the nature and operation of the ICs based on students', parents' and school personnel's views and placing it within the wider politico-socio-economic context. According to the literature review, there is no systematic evaluation of the working and the effectiveness of the particular settings (Avramidis and Kalyva 2006; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005; Drakos 2002). In fact, the ability to generate new understandings and theories was among the key elements for choosing an exploratory case study approach and adopting GT research techniques for data collection and analysis. Hence, the study can be defined as an exploratory case study employing a GT methods' approach. The research questions or interests that emerged through the literature review, including the policy documents, were further investigated while conducting the case study. Given the idiosyncratic nature of the study, these research questions can be better defined as theoretical propositions that guided the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009).

Study aims and research questions

A number of study interests emerged through the literature review (that also involved an in-depth critical review of the past and the latest laws of special education), based on the understanding that ICs were the outcome of those SEN laws in Greece. These study interests were further explored in School A and were reviewed in relation to the case study findings. The study interests are:

1. Are the notions of inclusion, SEN and pedagogy clearly defined in the Law 3699?
2. How is this formulated in the legislative text: Law 3699? Does it justify the reasons that lead to its development and the reasons for developing particular practices?
3. Is the policy applicable in practice? Does it explicitly indicate the means to its implementation? Are the responsibilities and duties of the personnel involved in the policy practice clearly stated?
4. How is SEN provision planned? How were categories used and do these facilitate students' learning and teachers' practice?

5. How is the SEN policy monitored and evaluated? Do policy-makers recognise the risks and problems related to the implementation of Law 3699 and the means to overcome them? Are the resources and funding stated in the Law 3699?

These study interests (that emerged from the literature and policies' review) were further explored within the operational context of IC, as the IC was and still is the primary form of policy implementation and inclusive practice in Greece. Consequently, the case study involved observation and interview data collection and analysis from the IC of a mainstream primary school (School A) in Greece. Accordingly, this case study aimed to explore and understand the following study interests:

1. How is inclusion viewed as a whole school practice?
2. How do participants understand the notion of inclusion and the nature of IC?
3. What is the form, function and inclusive practice of the IC based on participants' understandings and observations?
4. What are the outcomes for the students' participation in the IC?
5. Are students benefiting from the particular arrangements?

The above research interests and concerns regarding the IC's operation (and as drawn from the literature review) were seen as guiding points; they "*were used as points of departure to look at the data, to listen to interviews and to think analytically about the data*" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004, p.501). More precisely, the study interests acted as a guide in order to develop understanding through the research process rather than limit them (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004). Some study interests were reformed as the research progressed. However, they provided the main direction and an initial focus from which the case study initiated (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Sampling: Selection processes and description of operation of the school and the IC

The selected mainstream school (School A) was located in my home town in North Greece, this city was initially chosen as I had more opportunities to be allowed to carry out observations and interviews in the schools. Another reason that the city was chosen, was its geographical location: capital of the county in a rural area. This means that ICs had been scheduled to operate since the Law 1143/1981 and also SEN public services were constituted with the Law 2817 in the particular area. Therefore, it was also considered important to explore whether the SEN Law, since its initial formation, was implemented in the rural areas and the ways that policy reforms have impact the school's operation over the years.

In terms of choosing the particular school it should be mentioned that once ethical approval was obtained (see ethics section), the researcher contacted three mainstream primary schools in the city to discuss the research and request access based on whether the schools had ICs and for how many years the ICs had operated –in order to explore whether changes in reform regarding ICs had any impact on the operation of ICs.

In the first school access was denied by the Head Teacher (HT) on the basis that SEN is a very sensitive matter and most parents did not wish their community to know about their children's activities in the school. In addition, it was explained that these are private and confidential matters and that research on these settings is not appropriate. In the second school the HT agreed to provide access but he explained that the IC was operating only a few days a week and although he approved the request, he explained that it would be better to search for a school where the IC operates on daily basis. In the third school the HT was very positive and supportive and he explained that he believed that research should be promoted and facilitated in all schools and the teachers' role should be to support these endeavours. After we had both agreed that the research will be conducted in that school, the HT immediately informed the parents about the prospect of conducting a research in the IC. In this context, the HT's intentions and

enthusiasm was received with gratefulness and a sense of relief that the research was positively accepted but most importantly the case study would be possible.

School A was established in 1928. It is located in the county city of one of the rural counties of North Greece. This is an established university city, ethnically diverse and characterised by financial and cultural growth. In terms of school population, the majority of students attending the school are Greek Orthodox with a small number of students coming from a different cultural and religious background. Enrolment in Greek schools is decided based on catchment area. It is not a parental choice and students should attend the school within their locality. Students with SEN should also attend the school in the region they live. However, if within their catchment area there is not an IC, then parents can choose another school that has an IC if they wish their children to attend it. School A had an IC with four students attending the class. At the time of the study, the overall number of students enrolled in the school was over 200, placed within fourteen classes in 6 Year groups: two classes for Year groups 1, 2, 3 and 5 and three classes for the Year groups 4 and 6. The personnel in the school consisted of the HT, 14 GCTs, the ICT⁴, the foreign language teacher, the physical education (PE) teacher and the music teacher. Comparison between other schools in other Greek cities and within the city is difficult as Greek schools overall follow a common curriculum, common school hours, common organisational structure and they are governed by the Ministry of Education. However, it is important to mention that not all the schools within the city had ICs. School A compared to the 13 mainstream primary schools in the city, had a SC since Law 1566 and later with the Law 2817 an IC. It also offered support teaching during and after school hours for all students. Other schools within the city or other cities did not offer these services due to lack of either funding or personnel or even both.

One and a half months was spent in the school accordingly “to limit the effects of excessive socialisation, when too much time is spent in one place” (Strauss and Corbin, 1997, p.5). In cases where more data were needed, as the study progressed, follow-up visits with some of the participants were possible. The

⁴ It needs to be noted that SEN teachers can be employed at all school units that fall under the special education (mainstream/special schools). For the purposes of this study, the term ICT has been employed to differentiate between the SEN teachers employed in GCs/special schools and the SEN teachers in ICs.

school visits were on daily basis and observations were conducted 1) in the IC, 2) in the staff room and 3) in the school yard during the breaks.

The person responsible for the operation of the IC was the ICT. At the time of the study four pupils were attending the IC daily. The youngest student received one-to-one support and attended the IC for two hours every day (ten hours a week in total). The choice for one-to-one support, in the IC, was decided on the basis that the student's SEN would not allow the student to participate in a group and also because the student needed focused one-to-one support in order to efficiently progress academically. The support was focused on academic development, in the form of tutoring, on the core subjects: literacy and mathematics. Some emphasis was given to learn how to hold the pencil to improve his writing skills. The remaining three students were working as a group and no one-to-one support was provided to them during the time that the research was conducted in the school. The materials provided to the group in terms of activities were the same for all. In addition, students were given homework on a daily basis and the homework was expected to be handed in the next day. The type of support that was provided for the group was similar to the support for one-to-one in terms of teaching approach: style of communication and engagement, focused on academic achievements.

During the lesson time, the students were engaged in literacy and mathematics activities. On most days, the ICT did not provide activities that followed the GC's textbooks (provided to all students by the Ministry of Education), but followed the GC's curriculum. More precisely, the ICT was working on activities that supported the students' academic development, for instance, grammar activities, spelling and writing activities, time-tables activities. The duration of each lesson followed the school's schedule. The students attended the IC for two consecutive hours. After the end of their first hour of lesson they went out to play in the school yard or within the school building (same as their classmates in the GC) and after the break they returned to the IC. In the end of the second hour students returned to their GCs after the break.

Finally, the IC was located in a room next to the HT's room. The room was very small and it could not accommodate more than four students –there was barely enough space for an extra adult. In the room there were no pictures, there were

two tables and four chairs for the students, one big table and a chair for the ICT, there was also a white board, one computer (at that time it was not working) and some board games on the shelves (although the students were observed to use the board games only once during the time spent in the school).

Participants

As it was briefly mentioned in the presentation of the operation of the IC, four pupils were included within the study, the four student-participants of the IC were: Student A, Student B, Student C and Student D. These pupils were in different Year groups (ranging from Year 1 to Year 6), aged seven to ten years. Given that the city where the study conducted is small and the community is close, in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participant students and to minimise labelling or targeting by exposing the students' identity any additional information regarding gender, learning difficulties or year group was avoided or limited (see ethics section on p. 88). After all, the focus of this study was not to conceptualise on how learning difficulties were dealt within the mainstream school but rather to unfold how inclusive practice has been developed within mainstream setting.

In terms of the school personnel, staff participants included the HT, the ICT and four GCTs of different year groups. Each teacher was responsible for a different IC student, since all of them were in different year group. One teacher participated giving a formal interview whilst the rest preferred informal interviews and chats.

Apart from the pupils and the school staff, the study took under consideration the perceptions of parents as well as the SEN SA, so as to gain a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The SEN SA is the main regulator of SEN practice in Greece as all SEN services allocated to school, fall under his jurisdiction. Some of his duties involve: monitoring KEDDY, SEN teachers, school visits to ICTs, and training of SEN teachers). Therefore, his views, experience and expertise regarding inclusion and ICs were considered to be significantly important.

Finally, although all parents were informed and officially consented to the study, only three parents (mothers) were available to give interviews. One of the families

gave their consent for their child to participate but each time contact was attempted (both by HT and the researcher) both parents were unavailable or busy and eventually they did not take part in the study. Moreover, the sample consisted of mothers solely, because fathers worked during day hours and the interviews were scheduled during school hours. Therefore, mothers who participated in the study, represented the whole family.

Table 1. Presents the number of participants and their pseudonyms:

Number of participants in School A:	Participants' names:
4 Students	Student A Student B Student C Student D
3 Parents	Parent A Parent B Parent C
1 ICT	ICT
4 GCT	GCT A (Formal Interview) GCT B (Informal Conversations) GCT C (Informal Conversations) GCT D (Informal Conversations)
1 HT	HT
1 SEN SA	SEN SA

Table 1: Participants' table

Data collection methods and tools

GT employs systematised methods such as theoretical sampling, coding constant comparison, the identification of a core variable, and saturation (Cohen et al., 2007a, p.491). As it will be analytically presented below, the present study employed such core GT methods of data collection and analysis. In fact, the present section will initially present data collection methods and subsequently data analysis methods and procedures will be thoroughly described.

Theoretical sampling

The aim of the study procedure was to explore, demystify, develop and relate concepts and views. Theoretical sampling refers to the process of sampling (data collection) to generate a theory grounded in the data themselves (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006). This process was based on concerns and interests that have proven 'theoretical relevance' in the emerging theory. The term 'theoretical relevance' refers to those ideas and concepts that are considered significant due to their repetition or absence in the phenomena being studied and constitute the focus of the categories through the coding process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the theoretical sampling should consider certain principles: be cumulative, focused, have depth in focus, consistent (referring in the systematic process of data gathering on each emerging category) and planned, but at the same time, allow a certain degree of flexibility for the researcher to move around the area of study based on the data. This practice was used at all stages of the study with the simultaneous involvement of data collection and analysis.

Theoretical sampling as a strategy helped "to narrow the focus on emerging categories and as a technique to develop and refine them" (Charmaz, 2006, p.107). More precisely, theoretical sampling was related to phenomena that were observed in the IC and those phenomena or incidents were then followed up in interviews, in informal conversations with participants or observations during break-time. Concepts that become relevant through interviews and were followed up in later interviews and observations. For instance, when incidents of bullying or stigma were described in parents' and teachers' accounts, those incidents were followed up in interviews with other participants or by observing students during break-time. When the collection of the data did not provide any new theoretical insights then the categories were saturated or by using Dey's term the data were "theoretical sufficient" (Charmaz, 2006). At that point the gathering process stopped and progressed with the development of the evolving theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It would be more precise to say that data collection were theoretical sufficient, as well, given that the study followed a specific time-frame.

Theoretical sampling, was employed as a frame of reference and a general strategy of data collection. Other methods were employed to gather data: observations, interviews and document analysis. The methods were not only chosen because they are most commonly used in GT but due to their appropriateness and relevance in terms of providing greater insight and vivid data that are significant in enquiring and understanding the school as a living organism and in demystifying the aspects that constitute it: the students, their parents and the school staff. These methods were chosen to build a richer picture and deeper understanding in analysing the participants' beliefs, though, as well as, the inclusive practice (Clouth and Nutbrown, 2007). Therefore, observations and interviews were chosen as the qualitative methods of data collection "that best capture the kind of information sought" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.179).

Documents

Documents were used to enrich the study development and provide a thorough knowledge of the phenomena of interest (Charmaz, 2006). They built the theoretical analysis that enabled the conceptualisation of the area of study and gathering of more detailed and explicit data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004). The initial data analysis of the documents was based on the past and current legislations of special education in Greece. These are public documents that can be retrieved from the official webpage of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and from the webpages of departments affiliated to the Ministry of Education. These documents were chosen because they are the main government documents that provide information regarding the operation and management of inclusive education and practice. More precisely, two of the most significant SEN policy documents that were reviewed are: Law 2817 and Law 3699. Emphasis has been given to these laws because they are the most recent laws that determine how SEN education is implemented in Greece but most importantly, ICs were introduced with Law 2817 and maintained with the Law 3699.

Observations

Semi-structured, non-participant observation was chosen as a data collection method to grasp the dynamics of natural events as they occurred over time and discover things that may not become apparent in the scheduled interviews (Cohen et al., 2007a). Moreover, as Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest, “in order to understand any human phenomenon we must investigate it as part of the context within which it lies” (in Messiou, 2002, p.18). More specifically, this method was used to gather live data, be open and inductive as to better understand the class and school dynamics, how students interact, the quality of learning and the resources that are available in the ICs. In addition, observations were used to provide information about the outcomes of the legislative changes (in terms of implementation and practice) in these settings and contribute in the discussion about its efficiency. The record of the observations was primarily based on the research concerns. However, as the study progressed, the observations were guided by the study analysis and the codes and categories that emerged were also used at some occasions to gather more data. (Foster, 1996).

Finally, observations were also carried out in the staff room where the researcher could interact with the teachers and have informal conversations. The researcher was also allowed to carry out observations during the break-time and take notes on how students interacted with each other and were monitored by the teachers. While conducting observations it was considered important to also observe the students with SEN in their GCs to better understand 1) the school culture, 2) how IC students interacted with their classmates in GC, 3) whether they participated in the lesson and 4) how the GCT and their classmates engaged them in the GC. Therefore, I approached Student C’s GCT to ask if she would be interested in participating in the study by being interviewed and also if it would be possible to observe her lessons. The GCT agreed to observations but not to provide a formal interview, permission for observations had to be obtained by the HT. The next day the HT informed me that he was not comfortable in allowing me to carry out observations in the GC as my study was granted by the Greek Ministry of Education only for observations in the IC and not in GC. Being in the GC might have created tension in class or complaints by parents (according to the HT). The

GCT, however, had agreed to discuss some of the issues with me. In addition, I was able to also discuss with Student B's GCT, the PE teacher and Student A's GCT agreed to participate in the study by providing a formal interview.

The observations were in the form of notes. Three note-books were used, 1) one for observations in the IC, 2) one for observations during break-time and one for the school staff room and 3) the third note-book was used in various ways. For example, to describe the researcher's understanding, make notes about certain issues that needed further observation or needed to be addressed in interviews (Appendix 7).

Interviews

This method was chosen in order for students and staff to be able to express themselves based on their own understandings in their own words (Miller and Brewer, 2003). Interviews were used to gather information about the nature, efficiency and beneficence of the inclusive settings from the students' and all participants' point of view. This information provided rich detailed data that developed the study and enhanced researcher's understandings about the views, beliefs and thoughts of the participants. The analysis and interpretation of the data began and was based upon the participants' point of view and not on the researcher's presuppositions.

Follow up interviews and comparative methods were employed to clarify certain understandings or miscommunications and make theoretical connections (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004). More precisely, a follow up interview with the HT was scheduled to determine whether understandings from the interview were accurate. In addition, in informal conversations parents and teachers were also asked to clarify certain understandings. Students during break-times were also approached and through friendly conversations questions were asked regarding certain aspects that emerged through the interviews and observations. The researcher was very careful in ensuring that follow up questions did not cause distress, discomfort or perceived as judgmental by the participants.

The interviews were semi-structured, based initially on the broader research questions as emerged through the policy documents' analysis, to allow flexibility in structuring the interaction (Miller and Brewer, 2003). There were different sets of questions: one for students (Appendix 1), one for parents (Appendix 2), one for the GCT (Appendix 3), one for the ICT (Appendix 4), one for the HT (Appendix 5) and one for the SEN SA (Appendix 6). Different staff were interviewed to better understand the impact of the legislation in the school, their understandings about the nature of the class at a whole school level and make a comparison analysis between students and staff's views. The questions aimed to be open-ended to avoid single responses (Cohen et al., 2007a).

The aim of the researcher was to create a non-threatening and enjoyable environment, where the participants felt confident and comfortable to answer the appropriate and age-related questions (Cohen et al., 2007a). Due to familiarity reasons, interviews were conducted during the end of the third and fourth week of the school visits. The length of the interviews for students was approximately 45 minutes up to one hour. Breaks were made available to participants when needed. For the student participants, in order to feel more comfortable, a quick game was offered at the beginning of the interview based on the child's interests and a relaxed chat preceded the main interview with all participants. All interviews were scheduled at the school apart from the interview with the SEN SA.

In total, the researcher undertook four individual interviews with students, one per student in the IC. In addition, three interviews with the parents and seven interviews (four formal and three informal) with the school staff were conducted, to explore their understandings regarding: the legislative changes; whether they believed there was a gap between policy and practice in relation to IC; the notion of inclusion and how it was experienced by the participants; the effectiveness of the classes' function and the methods and resources that were used to facilitate students' learning. The interviews with the adults lasted from one to two hours and were digitally recorded.

At this section, it is also important to mention that the ICT did not wish to be recorded during the interview. The ICT said that some of his colleagues, in the past, had reported certain occasions where they have been misinterpreted or have been falsely accused. The ICT did not clarify whether these cases were

related to research studies. Therefore, the interview lasted longer than it was scheduled as the researcher had to spend more time ensuring that all the views were accurately typed. However, a recorded interview provides information from tone of voice regarding meanings, excitement, discomfort, disapproval, emphasis and so on. Some aspects were included by making notes in the note-book during the interview.

Finally, it is important to be mentioned that the interview with the SEN SA was never fully completed; therefore, clarifications on certain of the SEN SA's views were not possible. More precisely, the interview was scheduled on a specific date and setting proposed by the interviewee. During the interview and after a short period of time we had to interrupt as the SEN SA had to attend briefly a meeting. Therefore, I was asked to wait, however, the SEN SA left without notifying me and I was waiting for more than an hour. I contacted him again, he apologised for having to leave without notice and we rescheduled. However, he failed to attend the next meeting and the other two meetings after that. Therefore, the interview was never completed for reasons that have not become clear to the researcher. Although, the length of the interview was shorter, still it was very interesting and informative to hear the SEN SA's views and also notice how those corresponded or contradicted with the other participants' views but also with his own sayings.

Table 2. Presents the scheduled that was followed during the study for interviews and observations:

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Document analysis	4 days	4 days	4 days	4 days	4 days	4 days
IC observations	5 days	5 days	5 days	5 days	5 days	5 days
Interviews			2 students 2	2 students 1 parents ICT HT	GCT	SEN SA HT
Informal conversations and field notes	5 days	5 days	5 days	5 days	5 days	5 days

Table 2: Study schedule

Data analysis methods and procedures

This section explains in detail the methods and procedures that have been used to analyse the data from interviews, observations and policy documents by employing GT approaches to data collection and analysis.

Process of data analysis

Data collection and analysis were parallel and simultaneous processes in this study. As soon as interviews and observations in school started, data were transcribed and analysis began. Almost all interviews were transcribed and analysed while being at the school to keep the researcher close to the data and guide the course of further interviews and observations. Data were also collected

from informal conversations with the teachers at the staff room or school corridors, and they were also used as a guideline to inform further data collection. For example, in the interviews with parents, incidents of bullying were reported. Inevitably such information was included in subsequent interviews with the students and the teachers. At this point it seems important to mention that document analysis of the legislative framework regarding SEN in Greece had been analysed prior to getting into the field and acted as an inspiration for the study.

As far as GT coding techniques are concerned, the analysis of the data was carried out by employing constant comparative methods and memo writing. The use of cognitive maps was also essential in the development of the emergent themes. The primary approach that was used in analysis was coding: the conceptualisation of the data that was employed to 'capture' and condense participants' views and actions through analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). According to Charmaz (2006, p.46), "coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emerging theory to explain these data". Coding was applied by the use of various "sub-coding techniques": open coding, focused coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Initially, interviews were analysed separately but subsequently, cross-interview analysis took place with the two processes informing constantly each other as a back and forth process. Therefore, data were analysed in different phases, as follows:

Phase one: Open coding and code generation

The first phase was based on 'open coding' which involves close text reading, line-by-line review of data and labelling fragments of data: segments, words, lines or incidents; aiming to define and redefine their 'substance' through analysis. These labels were first phase codes and were attached to chunks of text of varying size (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Moreover, different codes could be tagged to the same chunk of text. For example, the sentence "*When he goes to the toilet the other children lock him in the toilet or they open the door as a joke*" (from an interview with Parent B) could be coded as "incident of bullying",

“absence of teachers’ supervision during breaks”, “potential safety issues”, “parental worries” (since it was mentioned by a parent) etc. At this phase, codes are descriptive and have no intention of interpretation.

Coding allows the researcher to interact with the data and through this analysis codes emerged. These provided direction and advanced the understandings in order to proceed with further analysis and data collection. In initial coding, staying close to the data, by line-by-line analysis, enabled the researcher to create codes based on what was seen and not on predetermined concepts (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004) and at the same time be critical and analytical in relation to the data by raising questions (Charmaz, 2006). Line-by-line coding aims to answer various questions: “What is this data a study of?”, “what is being referenced here?”, “what theoretical category does this specific datum indicate?” (Glaser, 1978).

The process of ‘*open coding*’ was performed twice. The reason for that was to ensure that initial codes were accurate, as well as, to determine whether the knowledge from the first round of data coding had an impact on the researcher’s understandings and judgments. Moreover, it was considered important to engage in a second round of coding because after the first round of data analysis, the researcher, due to personal and health issues had to interrupt her study. For that reason, it was considered even more essential to go back to the data and perform again the analysis so as to remain close to the data and ensure that initial understandings were accurate.

Phase two: Organisation of first phase codes into categories

After the completion of open coding for each interview, the emergent first phase codes were organised into categories; that is broader, more abstract and interpretive categories that are interested in the meaning of chunks of text. The codes that were transformed into categories were those that were frequently repeated in data or they were central in analysis interrelating with multiple codes, as well as these of high importance according to participants’ views. Therefore, a new list was created including broad categories such as ‘school policy’, ‘social

skills', 'wellbeing', 'friendships', 'bullying', 'safety', 'parents' concerns', 'GCT role in ensuring safety and inclusion', 'isolation', or 'otherness'.

Determining how to merge and transform codes into new wider categories was a challenging (sometimes highly complex) task as the researcher worried about whether chunks of data might be under-presented or undermined as they were not very frequent within and across interviews or whether codes could be used in more than one category.

However, at this phase of analysis, reorganising codes into categories and exploring relationships between data were facilitated by the employment of what in GT terminology is called 'focused coding'. Focused coding involves conducting paragraph by paragraph coding, which proved to be a very essential and a very useful tool in order to merge codes and turn them into umbrella categories. This process enabled the researcher to conceptualise larger segments of data like paragraphs or chunks of data. Focused coding refers to the analysis that elucidates certain codes as having overriding importance and lead to the creation of categories. Focused coding 'revealed' patterns between categories and shown how categories interrelated and intergraded. This process also brought to light possible gaps in analysis. Therefore, the researcher collected more data on certain categories or moved around categories, participants' interviews and observations to infuse those gaps and clarify the categories (Charmaz, 2006; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004).

For instance, focused coding in the above mentioned example sentence ("when he goes to the toilet the other children lock him in the toilet or they open the door as a joke") lead to the emergence of the category 'wellbeing'; the sentence was extracted from a paragraph and within this paragraph the parent expressed concerns about her child's wellbeing, the teacher's role, 'social-behaviour' and so forth. Therefore, 'wellbeing' was considered as an umbrella category that embraced many different codes and best described the particular chunks of data (Figure 1a).



Figure 1a: Codes that formulate the category of 'wellbeing'

The process of organising codes to categories was at this phase conducted at the level of single interviews, separately. Subsequently, though categories were further investigated across all participants' interviews, observations and field notes using constant comparison methods (see next section) so as to create concrete patterns. Finally, codes and categories from each individual interview were placed into cognitive maps to help the researcher to tidy up the findings and map them in the following phase based on groups of participants and eventually reach theoretical saturation.

Phase three: Towards the generation of themes: constant comparison, axial coding and cross-cognitive maps

The present study employed another central GT tool both at single and cross interview levels of analysis. More precisely, 'constant comparative methods' are employed to compare incident(s) with other incident(s), early interviews with later interviews, or to compare in observations similarities or differences in daily routine activities in the settings that are studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). In the present study such practice challenged taken-for-granted understandings and helped to form and reform understandings based on various

perspectives or implicit events and enabled the researcher to consider diversity in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). For example, there were instances identified in the data where parents might have perceived their children's progress or attitude as positive, while the school teachers' might have had a different opinion on the same matter. Also, there were cases where participants' opinions might have been antithetical with regards to their own opinions expressed at different times or they might have been inconsistent with regards to their beliefs about settings and services. More specifically, in more than one case, participants' views about a service were very positive but later in the interview they might have stated that the facilities are not adequate. All, these understandings were very important in order to conceptualise the data and conceive the emerged themes and final considerations.

After each interview was coded utilising the principles of open coding, focused coding and performing cognitive maps, 'axial coding' was employed to assemble the data and reform them into new categories, as well as, look into specific incidents and how these occurred in other interviews. Axial coding, as stated by Strauss and Corbin (1990), is the process by which "we begin to fit pieces of the puzzle back together" (p.211) in a relational form, to deepen the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis. The focus, in axial coding was to specify the properties of a category and identify how this category was developed, processed, the strategies that were employed to analyse it, manage and create it (this practice involved both inductive and deductive thinking). Developing these practices to 'discover' the properties and the relationships within categories via axial coding, was a step forward in formulating a substantive theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006).

For example, the properties of the category 'lack of staff' was explored further across all interviews looking for incidents. This was performed to identify whether this category had considerable significance and created a pattern that would later lead to the formulation of the emerging theory. More specifically, the 'lack of staff' was mentioned in different occasions, regarding contexts and had different impact on participants' lives. 'Lack of staff' was reported within the KEDDY service, in the mainstream school and in SEN SA's service and had an impact on students' learning, teachers' work, parents' perception and PI (Figure 2a). Therefore, the category 'lack of staff' was eventually manifested in many different

interviews and interrelated with many other categories, which makes it a ‘central category’ or what can be labelled as a ‘theme’. As it will be explicitly described below, themes are inferred concepts that emerged from central and key categories or sets of categories and lead to the development of an emergent theory.

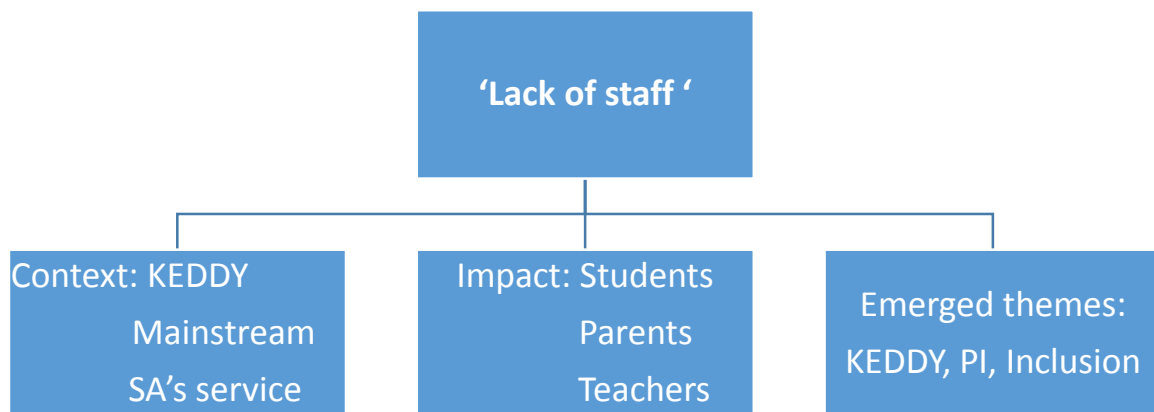


Figure 2a: Development of emerged themes

Besides axial coding, during this phase of analysis, interviews were also grouped based on participants’ accounts (students’ accounts, parents’ accounts, teachers’ accounts, HT and SEN SA) for triangulation purposes but also to strengthen and validate the emerging categories and themes. As in the previous phase of separate interview analysis, cognitive maps were employed once again to map the findings at cross-interview level. More precisely, separate interview cognitive maps were brought together and created a new set of group cognitive maps. For instance, regarding the category of ‘friendship’ individual participants’ cognitive maps the depicted the following findings: Student A: ‘no friends’, Students B: ‘more friends’, Student C: ‘no friends’ and Students D: ‘One friend’. When data from individual cognitive maps were placed together ‘lack of friends’ became a single category that applied to all students as a group. The categories that were identified using group cognitive maps helped the researcher to sum up the study findings and consequently produce, using a deductive approach, a holistic cognitive map at the final phase of coding: ‘*Selective coding*’.

Selective coding was employed to determine the key and central concepts -earlier mentioned as themes- that were theoretically saturated. Themes can be defined as umbrella concepts that pulled together all the important categories to form a story that would not be complete otherwise (LaRossa, 2005). In order to achieve selective coding, the analysis was based on cognitive maps which guided the final stage of coding and enabled the researcher to conceptualise the categories, their relationships as well as their properties and how these properties fitted and re-fitted into existing categories (Breckenridge and Jones, 2009). Once a category was identified in all GCMs, then was modified into a theme and then was cross-referenced with observations and memos using constant comparisons. In the present study themes such as 'Inclusion', 'Diagnosis and Statement', 'KEDDY', 'PI's and Curriculum' 'Parents' concerns and children's wellbeing' proved to be of high importance, incorporating many second phase categories and collectively created a functional theoretical framework.

In fact, in the course of the analysis and across all phases, memo-writing was employed as a GT technique to aid the process and lead to the formulation of the evolving theory. Memos were forms of written records that included analysis and abstract thoughts in regards to the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Memos were used since the early phases of the study documenting initial thoughts and until the very final phase of the study. Memos became thicker and grown theoretically as the study progressed. They were not structured or followed a certain format. Memo-writing were performed for the researcher; to help the researcher conceptualise about her data, unblock or clarify ideas and to support or amend earlier ideas or final conceptualisations as those emerged as the study progressed (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004; Charmaz, 2006). Memo-writing was a technique that proved to be vital in providing a more structural form of dealing with the data, as all memos were organised based on dates and times. Memos were used while transcribing the data by making notes or asking questions, while observing the participants and the school staff and after interviewing the participants. Observations, memos, notes, as well as, cross-referencing the data between the GCMs and within the individual cognitive maps was used to ensure triangulation and saturation of data. When no more data could support the core categories, the data was considered to be saturated and final themes that formulated the theory become established.

Concluding, the different phases of analysis generated different levels of findings with the codes being organised into broader categories and categories being converted into inferred themes, the holistic conceptualisation of which finally lead to the formulation of a substantive theory (Figure 2b).

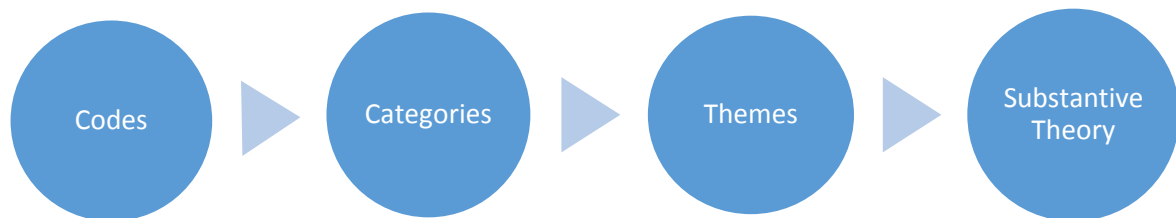


Figure 2b: The outcomes of the evolving process of data analysis

Moreover, it is important to mention that employing GT techniques is a process where constant theoretical concepts are redesigned and reintegrated while analysing and reviewing the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Coding is not a linear process; during focus or axial coding the researcher needs to go back to initial coding to refine theoretical categories. At the same time, the researcher was also engaged with memo-writing and constant comparative methods. Therefore, GT practice not only moves around from data analysis to data collection but also around techniques to assemble, synthesise, assess and develop the emerging theory by converting a body of data into concepts. Moreover, all the above-mentioned techniques and procedures of data analysis provide a framework for the researcher to endeavour with the analysis of the data.

Trustworthiness

To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, data based on researcher's observations and analysis were triangulated with other methods, like data obtained from students and school staff interviews (Wellington, 2000). In addition, the use of constant comparative methods strengthen the analysis and the

development of the evolving theory. Moreover, member checking was used as a method with other research-colleagues, as well as, with some of the participants to compare and crystallise the researcher's analysis and interpretations of the data (Robson, 2002). Furthermore, during data analysis, the researcher was looking for negative cases/instances. More precisely, the researcher was searching for instances that complement or contradict with the theory. This practice added density and variation in the development of the emerging theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006).

Ethics

Social research is a dynamic process that relies on mutual trust and cooperation. It often involves an intrusion into people's lives (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p.95) and qualitative research often intrudes even more. Therefore, the collection of personal and sensitive information, inevitably accompanies the consideration of ethical issues (Grix, 2004). Ethical issues arise in all research stages (Cohen et al., 2007a) and so, the qualitative researchers need to constantly explore their actions in relation to the wellbeing of those people being studied and 'do the right thing' to protect their participants (DeRoche and DeRoche, 2005, p.336).

In the present study the following actions were taken to provide the frame of the ethical conduct of the particular study: Participants' physical, psychological and emotional state was respected at all times during the study. Participants' culture, race, gender, age, religion, socio-economic background and beliefs were respected and protected. The objective of the researchers was to ensure that individual rights were not violated and to promote fairness in the interpretation of the data (Woolfson et al., 2007).

The study followed the ethical guidelines provided by BERA (2004; 2011) and complied with the requirements of the University's Ethical Policy. Moreover, before embarking on the conduction of the research, the study had gained official approval by both the Ethics Committee of the Graduate School of Education of Exeter University and the Ministry of Education in Greece, which examined the

methodological efficiency and the ethical precautions in order to safeguard the protection of the rights of the participants.

More precisely, the researcher had to submit the research proposal (in the Greek language) to the Ministry of Education for review and approval from a panel of SEN professionals working in academia and were employed as associate members in the Ministry of Education. The waiting period for approval was approximately two months. A list of schools in which research can be conducted was provided by the Ministry of Education and the final schools chosen for research were provided along with the submission of the research proposal. The research was only allowed to be conducted in those specific schools and in the specific settings as described in the research proposal. Once approval was granted it was the researcher's responsibility to approach the school's HT and request further permission to conduct the research in the given school. The HT had the right to deny access in the school for research, in the case that the research was concerned to be violating the students' rights or did not comply with the HT's views. Therefore, obtaining approval in Greek schools, in order to perform a research study, was a long process that involved different steps:

- 1) submitting the research proposal (ensuring that the methodological tools that have been chosen comply with the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education), choose the schools where the research will be conducted
- 2) awaiting for approval
- 3) once approval is obtained by the Ministry of Education, seeking second approval from the HT of the school

Once official approvals were obtained (Appendix 8), second approvals were sought from the HT of the school (Appendix 8), the ICT (Appendix 9), the GCT (Appendix 10), the parents of the children and of course the children themselves. The researcher was aiming to include the students as *active participants* in the study and listen to their voices and so, prior to the study commencing, student-participants' agreement to take part and cooperate with the researcher in the study was essential.

Therefore, the issues of access and acceptance which are closely related to the principle of informed consent became apparent since the initial phases of the

research (Cohen et al., 2007a). Potential participants were fully and accurately informed about the aims and the procedures of the study on the basis of the 'right to know' about the implications of their participation prior to the conduction of the study (Oliver, 2003). Freedom of choice is essential in social research as part of the right to self-determination (Cohen et al., 2007a). Therefore, participants were informed that their involvement in research was voluntary and they were assured that they could terminate their participation at any time and for any reason (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2006) as well as that had the right not to answer questions. Therefore, informed consent was an on-going process in this study.

Moreover, to ensure that all students understood the process and the nature of the study, a whole-class discussion (prior to the completion of the concepts) was conducted during which the ICT and the researcher explained to the students the process and the nature of the study. Information was provided in an easily understood manner using common-sense language and avoiding academic jargon (Cohen et al., 2007a). Afterwards, the students were asked to say what they thought the study involved. Those who did not have a clear understanding were given further clarifications and parents were fully informed too. All students' questions about the study were immediately answered during all the stages of the research. In every case, during interviews, the researcher ascertained that students understood the questions. If at any point a question was unclear and could not be further clarified it was withdrawn.

In addition, written consent forms were also given to the parents respecting and supporting their right to be informed about all the activities that their children were engaged in at the school.

At this point it should be mentioned that most of the parents were very positive about the research and gave their permission to their children to participate to the study on the basis that they were contributing to the enhancement and development of an educational system that will become more relevant to their children's needs as the research is taking into account students', teachers' and parents' views. Moreover, many parents were eager to give their views as they felt that this was the first time that they were given the opportunity to express their concerns about the existing educational system and speak about the barriers in their children's educational journey.

Besides, on the basis of acknowledging that participants share sensitive and intimate information, the researcher is obliged to provide guarantees of protection of the privacy. Therefore, transcripts of interviews and all other collected data were kept confidential and only used for research purposes. The real names of the participants involved in the study and schools were replaced by pseudonyms (DeLaine, 2000). The researcher was following a rigorous anonymity process, in a small city like the one in North Greece, it is possible that confidentiality may be jeopardised. If, for instance, the school had an autistic student, then any comments about the resources available to autistic students may be associated with that student (Woolfson et al., 2007). Therefore, as it was already been discussed, any reference to students' specific special educational needs or personal identifier of any type were avoided (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). In this way both confidentiality and non-stigmatising practices were asserted.

This type of concern was dealt with by consulting with the teachers, HT and pupil during the time of the research. The HT and the parents were fully aware of the above ethical issues and had given full permission to proceed with the study and conduct the interviews and observations.

Finally, a major ethical concern regarding the particular study was not to be perceived as targeting particular students. This was minimised since the study was conducted in a whole time in the IC with the participation of all students. Therefore, the same procedures were applied to all students and no single students were pulled out from their mainstream classes. In addition, the study was directed towards the operation of the IC and did not focus on particular students in terms of categories of SEN. It was rather focused on all students' needs and how these were met in the ICs. Given, though, the setting where the study was carried out, it was apparent to the whole school that the researcher's interest was focused on SEN and the IC's operation. Concluding, ethical issues were given careful consideration in the present study so as to ensure that the emotional wellbeing of all the participants as well as the protection of their rights. The findings of the case study will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter four: Data presentation of the findings

The data findings will be presented by providing the participants' views based on the interviews and informal conversations. Data from observation findings will also be included supporting participants' views or displaying inconsistencies or antithetical instances between participants' interviews and researcher's observations. The title of each of the following sections represents the emergent themes with a description that includes participants' views and quotes. The first emergent theme that will be presented is 'Inclusion', following by 'IC and GC', 'KEDDY', 'Diagnosis and Statement', 'PIs and Curriculum', 'Parents' concerns and children's wellbeing', 'Summary of the researcher's observations', 'Summary of Findings' and finally 'SEN policy documents'.

Inclusion

Inclusion was one of the main interests of the particular study, with a focus on how it was implemented, perceived and delivered within School A. Inclusion is a very broad term and there are different notions embedded within it. For the purposes of this study, inclusion has been explored as a practice and as a notion. The main focus was on how it was perceived and implemented in the school. More precisely, by the people and the services involved in making inclusion in School A in Greece: the staff, the students, parents and KEDDY as a service.

The interviews with the members of the school staff were initiated by asking them their views on inclusion based on their understandings and experience. They all provided very similar answers: a general definition of inclusion, a definition that could have been found in educational text books. For example, the following are quotes about inclusion according to the HT, the ICT and the GCT respectively:

"The constitution of inclusion is for some children that we consider they present some problems in learning or behaviour or in the way they communicate with the

other children, and we try through the ICTs that we have in schools –not every school-...to guide the students better.”

“Inclusion refers to the school setting, so the children can catch up with the children of their age, so they can progress educationally, socially and within the family.”

“To put it simple, inclusion refers to the child with some difficulties at either mental level or mobility level and how it can be included with the rest of the children and the school in general, to become one, like the rest of the students.”

Inclusion was perceived as an SEN related ‘constitution’ that aimed to help the students ‘remediate’ the ‘problem’ so they can be included in the mainstream and become ‘equal’ to their classmates. It was an educational process that aimed to support the learning (academic) and emotional development of all students with SEN and include them within the mainstream school culture. It became apparent from participants’ responses that inclusion as a practice was considered to be taking place in the IC. For example, when the GCT was asked to talk about inclusion she replied: *“You mean the ICs?”* Overall, any reference to inclusion was associated mostly with the SEN, academic development and provision was located within the IC. As the interviews unfolded and participants understood better the process and the intentions of the interview (a discussion, rather than a formal examination of their knowledge), some of the participants gave more concrete answers based on their own views and experiences.

More precisely, once clarifications were provided, two participants said that inclusion should be a whole school process that should have aimed in pupils’ wellbeing and happiness and bringing all students together. More precisely, the GCT added that inclusion should be a whole school practice and not only be related to SEN as many students in her class had conflicts with each other and she had to step in and reassure that all pupils were treated equally regardless of, for example, race, colour or physical appearance. The GCT stated that inclusion should refer to everyone as all students in the school were unique with specific needs that should be addressed.

“Inclusion is more evident in SEN students, but believe me, in my class I had to take steps towards inclusion to assure that everyone can co-exist in the class as there were many conflicts between them.”

The HT who initially gave a general definition about inclusion, he later added that inclusion should not only be the ICT’s responsibility, it should also be considered as a whole school practice. The HT made this remark and explained, without

having been asked, that inclusion should not only rely on the ICT's effort. This gave further insights on how inclusion was perceived and was practised within School A. a point that will be discussed in more detail as the presentation of data and findings will unfold. The HT further explained that inclusion should have had two main objectives:

“The initial concern should be about social inclusion (friendships, happiness and games) and the secondary objective should be the academic inclusion.”

Inclusion, according to the HT, had taken place in the GC, because in this class all pupils interacted with each other (compared to the IC), learned social rules, resolved conflicts and were taught ‘proper’ behaviour. Moreover, in the GC every GCT was a very powerful figure and was working with all the pupils. Therefore, the GCT had ‘full control’ and knowledge over the class, according to the HT. On the other hand, according to the HT, the IC operated as an isolated department from the rest of the school within which the ICT only interacted with the students who attended the IC. Therefore, in cases of conflict or tension between students in the IC and in the GC, the ICT could have not intervened as he or she did not frequently interact with all the pupils who attended only the GC. As a result, students from the GC would not have listened to the ICT's suggestions. Consequently, in the view of the HT, the ICT lacked the ‘authority’ that was necessary to resolve tensions and bring students together.

According to the observations, it was very interesting to notice that the ICT only interacted with the mainstream students once a week during break-time duty. Moreover, during all breaks and when free time was available to the ICT, that time was spent in the IC. In workplaces, on most occasions inclusion between employees is also achieved during breaks. More precisely, in schools during break-time teachers can exchange views and express concerns about pupils. In School A, this was not evident between the GCTs and the ICT, as interaction was very limited. Generalisations cannot be made on the role of ICT and the IC and whether in other schools the IC is an incorporated member of the school culture or whether the ICT and the IC are mostly considered to be a separate service within the school. However, in School A, there was a clear distinction between the GC and the IC and how those two settings and staff interacted with each other. This distinction did not seem to serve to facilitate inclusion and incorporate

the two settings into one common practice that aimed to support students' academic, social and emotional needs and development.

When the SEN SA was asked what he believed inclusion was and its scope based on his experience, he also gave a rather general definition of inclusion and not particularly based on his experience:

"Inclusion is the educational process which aims for the holistic development of children with SEN or children with disabilities and is implemented through the IC."

Another important point was the SEN SA's reply to the reasons that prevent inclusive practise being effective.

"Inclusion does not operate properly, there is a need for more training and a need to raise teachers and students' awareness in order for inclusion to be actualised...the 15% that does not work is due to GCTs and ICTs that have not understand that the students who have a special educational need should be included in the 'canonical' class and be educated 'canonical'."

The SEN SA also added:

"In my county there are no problems regarding inclusion, I do not know about the other counties."

This comment was interpreted as that inclusion in other counties might not be as effective compared to his county. The SEN SA mentioned quite a few drawbacks that restricted the effectiveness of inclusive practices but, at the same time, the SEN SA said that in his county inclusion works very efficiently. This raises the question of how it was possible for inclusion to have been effective in the particular county, when according to his accounts there were not sufficient professionals and IC personnel, resources, training for teachers and lack of awareness and knowledge around SEN issues and practices.

Further to that, the language that was used, at some points, could be considered as anachronistic or stigmatising as he kept on referring to the mainstream as the 'normal' or 'proper' school. The actual word used was 'canonical school' or 'canonical classes' when referring to mainstream which in English can be translated as 'normal' or 'proper'. There were also instances where he used the word 'problematic' when referring to students with SEN or SEN in general. It was interesting that he did correct his choice of words in an effort to use more 'politically correct' language. This type of language can be attributed to many factors, however, it is expected that people in higher positions and power within

the SEN field will use a non-stigmatising language or attitude towards special education to embrace inclusion and reduce stigma.

Overall, inclusion as a notion within the school, was understood mainly as SEN provision for students with SEN and as a practice it was situated within the IC. In addition, according to the HT inclusion should be divided in social inclusion (happiness/wellbeing/acceptance) and academic inclusion (achievements). Social inclusion was 'happening' within the GC where the social rules applied to all students and GCT had the 'authority' and 'power' to intervene in cases of conflict. Whereas, IC was an isolated setting where the ICT did not interact with all students. Therefore, in cases of conflict between students the ICT could not interfere given that his knowledge about the students outside the IC was limited. According to the SEN SA, inclusion aimed to the holistic development of students with SEN and it was implemented through the establishment of ICs. In addition, he said that the aim was not to differentiate the student. Finally, the SEN SA said that inclusion worked excellently in his county, although he mentioned many factors that might have restricted the effective implementation of inclusion (external services, lack ICs, training for teachers and lack of awareness around SEN issues). However, how can a practice be holistic when it is situated in the ICs? And how are students not differentiated when they are pulled-out of the GC? Finally, how is it possible for inclusion to be excellent in the specific county given the inequalities identified by the SEN SA? Answers to these questions will be attempted in the discussion chapter.

IC and GC

The ICs operation was another core interest of the study as it is considered to be the main expression of inclusive practice in Greek mainstream schools based on the policy documents (Law 2817, Law 3699). Therefore, as previously explained in the methodology chapter, all observations were conducted in the IC. The interviews were carried out after the first two weeks of observations in IC and at break-times and the questions were formulated taking into account all observations. While conducting observations it was considered important to also observe the students with SEN in their GCs to better understand 1) the school

culture, 2) how IC students interact with their classmates in GC, 3) whether they participated in the lesson and 4) how the GCT and their classmates engaged them in the GC. Therefore, I approached Student C's GCT to ask if she would be interested in participating in the study by being interviewed and also if it would be possible to observe her lessons. Although GCT agreed to observations but not to provide a formal interview, permission for observations had to be obtained by the HT. The next day the HT informed me that he was not comfortable in allowing me to carry out observations in the GC as my study was granted by the Greek Ministry of Education only for observations in the IC and not in GC. Being in the GC might have created tension in class or complaints by parents, according to the HT. The GCT, however, had agreed to discuss some of the issues briefly with me. In addition, I was able to also discuss with Student B's GCT, the PE teacher and Student A's GCT agreed to participate in the study by providing a formal interview.

The HT, as it was mentioned before, considered the IC setting as being stigmatising for the students who attended it, because they might have been perceived as different from the rest of their classmates. That was probably one of the reasons (as it also became apparent during the observations and interviews) that the HT, the teachers, the parents and the students when referred to the IC they used terms like 'the other class' or 'support teaching'⁵ or 'the class of Mr. D'. On this matter the GCT B in an informal conversation said:

"When students go to the IC we tell the other students that they go to the ST session." Then she added: "But, one day a student asked me why you say that Student B goes to the ST as the teachers are not the same?" and the GCT replied: "because there are two different groups and teachers."

The teacher then explained that the students would believe and follow the direction that the teachers would give. The general direction followed by the personnel in School A was not to discuss the actual nature of IC based on the belief that children were 'cruel'. Relating the IC to the ST could prevent incidents of bullying or stigmatisation, given that the ST was offered to all students and not

⁵ The term 'support teaching' refers to students' participation in a specific learning programme for literacy and mathematics. Support teaching is provided during or after school hours and consists of a group of maximum 5 students per class. The HT has the responsibility to request the operation of ST but students' participation in ST is decided by the GCTs (PD 462, 1991, P.2240).

specifically to students with SEN. However, this understanding contradicted any intention of minimising stigma by raising awareness to the whole school regarding SEN and IC.

The ICT said that IC is related to ST because the students with SEN attend the IC in order to close the gap of educational achievements between them and their classmates in GC. In addition, the ICT believed that parents preferred the term ST because they did not want to admit that their children might be facing difficulties in school that require the involvement of a SEN teacher.

The HT believed that the IC operated as an isolated part of the school in the sense that the ICT did not interact with the mainstream students but only with the students with SEN. He said:

“Issues like socialisation and acceptance are handled by the GCT as the ICT does not have any contact with the GC, the IC is isolated...The way the IC works with separate class, separate teacher isolated from the GC, creates a gap, it is adequate...”

When the HT was asked if there was cooperation between the GCTs and the ICT he replied that teachers were expected to cooperate on curriculum matters and discuss about what they would teach or about any difficulties they might be faced with. He also added:

“We all work in the same school, there is cooperation.”

Although all the staff worked under the ‘same roof’, the cooperation between the GCT and the ICT was limited possibly due to the separation of the two settings. Student A’s GCT in the formal interview said:

“I am a new teacher, I do not have experience in SEN, if the colleague from IC asks my help I will help as much as I can but I do not know much.”

Student B’s GCT, in an informal conversation on the same matter said:

“Nothing special, if I find him in the corridor or somewhere else I might ask him.”

When Student C’s class teacher was asked, in the informal conversation, about communication and cooperation she said that if she had needed something she might have asked the ICT but they did not have planned meetings to discuss about the student’s progress.

The ICT on this matter did not reply directly during the interview, instead he said that many teachers felt relief each time a student with SEN attended the IC. According to the ICT, that was the main reason that GCT were positive towards the operation of the IC, because the ICT removed the 'problem' from the mainstream class. More precisely he said:

"Some teachers express very strongly the fact that they want me to take the students in IC, they say to me take him, I cannot cope with him anymore, and some students can feel that and then the relationship is destroyed...The child is not excluded from the class but feels inferior and that is enough."

During informal conversations the ICT did mention that there was not enough contact with the mainstream staff and he said that he preferred to stay in the IC but he did not elaborate on this matter.

Student B's GCT in the informal conversation mentioned that it was good that the student attended the IC as she was then free to teach the class without disturbance. Student C's GCT in the informal conversation mentioned that she found the student's behaviour very challenging in the class. She also mentioned that although she knew that the student could not complete the activities that she gave to the rest of the class, she always gave him the same homework as she did not want him to feel any different. This suggested a sensitivity towards the student's feelings and possibly an intention not to 'differentiate' the students with SEN from the rest of the class. At the same time GCT C mentioned that she believed that it was good that Student C attended the IC as he could not follow the lesson in the mainstream class and she was unable to support him in the GC.

The HT comments on the same matter supported the ICT's beliefs that the GCTs might have perceived the existence of IC as a 'relief'. The HT said:

"Some children who are naughty, naughty is not the right word to use, hyperactivity maybe is better, when this child leaves the room for two hours you feel relief, the room is calmer...The teacher can then work more efficiently with the rest of the students...Maybe some teachers might have tried to calm down the student but they might not have the knowledge or the patience..."

When GCT A, was asked if having a student who is classified as SEN could have had an impact on her teaching, she replied:

"Not a problem at all, I wish I had the opportunity to help more but when the time for teaching is so limited because of the curriculum there is not enough time to

be devoted to one student and with so many students in the class it is very difficult.”

She also mentioned:

“I would love to have had a practical module at university about SEN with practical examples that demonstrate how you support students with learning difficulties and other problems like, for example domestic violence, how you behave in challenging situations, the steps you follow...When I was told that I will have a student with SEN I froze, I did not know what to do, do you understand? The books are good but in practice things are different. We are all blind, we keep on working with whatever comes in our way and based on what we are faced with we act.”

Therefore, the teacher was asked if she believed that training was necessary and she replied:

“Absolutely, it is necessary, they need to let us do observations or placement in ICs, I have never been in any IC while I was at the university.”

The HT also mentioned that GCTs did not have the knowledge and experience to support students with SEN in GCs. He mentioned that the SEN seminars for teachers were limited or lacked practical aspects. According to the HT there was a need for practical training on SEN for GCTs. From teachers' accounts it became apparent that they based their practice on personal judgment, beliefs and experience and not on professional guidelines issued or suggested by the Ministry of Education.

When Parent A was asked to describe her thoughts regarding her child's attendance in the IC she said that all the academic work and progress was mainly carried out in the IC. She then added:

“In GC he cannot follow the fast pace, he does not have time to copy from the whiteboard...”

The mother's views suggested that GCTs knowledge on SEN matters might have been limited and could have minimised students' participation in class, as well as the academic progress.

The SEN SA stated that there was a lack of human resources and training in SEN and mainstream education. He said that this was the factor that was restricting students' learning development and was undermining the notion of inclusion at a practical and theoretical level. He also mentioned that in order for inclusion to work efficiently there was a need for training. Moreover, educators as well and

parents and students should have been well informed about inclusion and SEN matters. More precisely, the SEN SA said:

“Teachers are sensitive towards SEN but they do not know enough, there is no knowledge, special education is not voluntarism is professionalism and should be good professionalism which also requisites sufficient knowledge.”

This comment supports the teachers’ views who said that they based their practice on personal understandings, rather than in professional standards and guidelines. Interestingly the Law 3699 states that one of the main duties of the SEN SA is raising awareness to ICTs and KEDDYs on epistemological and methodological matters. While the SEN SA was referring to teachers’ and parents’ lack of awareness, he did not mention who was responsible for raising awareness and enhance knowledge and the means and methods to achieve this.

Another interesting point that emerged from the interviews with the parents while they were giving their views regarding the IC was related to transition.

Parent A stated that she was very anxious about her child’s transition to secondary school. She said that there was no planned provision for school transition. She had to organise all the paperwork (to ensure that her child will be supported and safe when he will move from primary school to secondary) in February, to ascertain that Student A would receive *parallel support* for her child in September. It was obvious that the transition process for Parent A was a very distressing matter for her, especially because no provision was planned within the school. Parent B mentioned that the transition from one year to the next was very difficult. Students B had a new class teacher and that was found to be very challenging for the child because he was very attached to his previous teacher. Parent C also stated that the transition from GC to the IC was very challenging as Student C refused to attend the IC. The student preferred to be in the GC and refused to go to school if he had to attend IC. Student C also said:

“I did not like it there (IC), I used to cry because I was young and I was afraid...I like it now.”

All the cases described by the parents were very different from each other but the common variable in all of them was lack of a set school transition plan. A plan may have ensured that the transition of students from one setting to the other would not have been challenging and created emotional discomfort or become a barrier to the students’ emotional and academic development and progress. The

cases described by the parents could be summarised as: 1) One year group to the other, for example moving from Year 2 to Year 3, 2) transition from GC to IC and 3) transition from primary school to secondary school.

Another finding was related to the ICT's gender. All parents mentioned that they had noticed that a male teacher's approach could differ from a female teacher's approach in terms of being stricter, louder or having a more dynamic presence. In the case of Students A and C, their parents believed that the teacher might have been very loud or strict at times and that might have been a barrier for their children's learning, as well as their willingness to attend or participate in the lesson in the IC. More specifically, Parent C said that due to the skills and strong personality of the teacher, Student C was intimidated and refused to attend the IC. Parent B said that her child had a male teacher for the first time and was described as beneficial, in terms of learning, as her child appeared to be more concentrated during the lesson or more willing to complete the homework for IC. She said that female teachers are more sensitive towards students' needs and kinder and students can get away with not doing homework or completing all activities, while the presence of a male teacher can prevent such behaviour.

On my second visit to school to meet the parents, present the study and hand out the consent forms, the father of Student B's husband said to the ICT (who was also present) that he would have preferred if the ICT could have used a calmer voice to address Student B. The parent said that strict and loud voices could trigger unwelcome behaviours. Unfortunately, none of the fathers attended the interview meetings therefore, no further data on fathers' views were available.

Parents' opinions suggested that teacher's gender was also related to the parents' personal expectations. Parents who were probably more oriented towards academic achievements preferred a more authoritative figure, while parents who were primarily oriented towards children's social and emotional development preferred a more protective figure.

Students' views

Student A mentioned that he was equally happy in both settings with both teachers and he did not express any preference. Student B said that he preferred the IC because in the GC there were many children and it was noisy. He said that

in the IC he learned more. He also mentioned that he attended another school in the afternoon where he had two teachers. Student B also mentioned that the 'private institutions' were fun because they played board games, he had time off to watch television programmes, the teachers were giving him treats and he also did learning activities. The student finally said:

"I like going to Mr. D's class (IC) and at the PI...I am bored in the class (GC)."

Student C in regards to both IC and GC said that he liked both settings and he did not have any preferences. He also mentioned that he had another teacher outside the school that he really liked him. When Student D was asked the reasons that he attended IC, he replied to learn how to read and write and he then added:

"Since I started coming to this class I do better but I would prefer to be more in my class (GC), I do different activities there, in the other class (IC) I only do learning activities...It is easier with Mr. E (GCT) because there are more children there and I can relax, while Mr. D (ICT), he always makes us do work."

Student D expressed his preferences clearly. He said that he preferred his previous ICT:

"Mrs A (previous ICT) was nicer than Mr D (ICT), she used to let us do drawings, Mr. D does not even let me cut a piece of paper, we always do learning activities and sometimes if we finish the lesson on time we might play 'hangman'."

Student B also mentioned that he would have liked to do drawings or painting at school:

"We never draw in neither classes, at Mrs K's (GCT) even at arts lesson we never draw."

During the observations in IC it was evident that the teaching approach was oriented towards learning activities. During the lesson students had to complete literacy or mathematics activities. When students made mistakes they had to repeat the activity. No other type of activities was observed during the time spent in IC. Only one time, by the end of the lesson they played 'hangman'. The ICT at times appeared impatient regarding their progress:

"How many times do I have to repeat the same thing?" or "Again? Do I need to repeat it the same thing again?"

Based on observations, the ICT seemed to forget at times that students' difficulties might have limited their attention span or reaction time. At the same

time, the ICT was showing interest about the students and their activities outside the school. Most of the days the lesson would have started with the ICT asking:

“How was your day yesterday after school? Did you do something fun?”

There was an interesting mix of behaviours and approaches. There was a single incident where one day the ICT said in a strict and upset voice:

“You come here to learn how to behave! I do not care if you learn maths! You need to learn manners! If you want to say something put up your hand!”

Despite this single incident, it was obvious, through observations that the ICT’s focus was mainly on learning activities. His pedagogical approach seemed to be anachronistic and he seemed to be confused regarding the role of the IC or the methods that should be employed while working with students with SEN.

It is important to note again that generalisation cannot be made regarding the operation of ICs in Greece or the ICT’s teaching approach, as the data were collected from one single mainstream school. However, in the particular school, there seemed to be confusion between practices, notions and understandings regarding inclusion and SEN education. Possibly constant practical training (as suggested by other participants) or peer observations might have been useful to better understand practices and notions.

The SEN SA stated that ICs were the main form of applied inclusion in Greece. He said that ICs were efficient in the way they operate, although, he identified certain shortcomings in the ICs function. One of those was that although the Ministry of Education had officially announced the number of ICs that should operate in each county, in reality not all ICs that had been proclaimed operated due to shortages in SEN personnel.

“The IC in Greece is working efficiently but we do not have that many ICs”.

Moreover, he said that lack of permanent appointed personnel in ICs created barriers to the students’ learning needs, as every year new ICTs were appointed.

“The bad thing in inclusion and special education is that every year we have temporary teachers and very few permanent teachers, we have different teachers every year in ICs that created problems in the special educational needs of students.”

Another factor that prevented inclusion and SEN SA's work, in the particular county, was the fact that the SEN SA had 274 school units under his jurisdiction. A condition that prevented him from visiting all schools under his jurisdiction.

Finally, when he was asked whether attending ICs can be stigmatising for students with SEN, he said that attending ICs is not stigmatising. In Greece there is no stigma attached to "educational disability" in terms of being different or to students with SEN attending ICs; in the sense that students with SEN were not perceived as being different by the school. He said:

"Being different is a human right, therefore we have the responsibility to accept it."

According to the SEN SA, that many efforts have been made over the years to reform anachronistic ideas in society and in the educational practices. One example was that the Ministry of Education had achieved to incorporate at legislative level Special Education within the mainstream education by introducing the Laws: 2817 and 3699. Moreover, he said:

"IC is not a stigma, but there is no other form of inclusive practice in Greece. The stigma depends on us and how we will act upon it in the 'canonical school', if we say that our children are the most important there is a stigma but if our children co-exist and cooperate with the children of the canonical should, in other words everyone has equal rights, then there is no stigma. In order for that to be achieved though, schools should raise awareness around SEN issues and inform parents, mainstream students and students with SEN."

The use of 'our students' can suggest a sense of 'belonging', 'care' and 'community', but, at the same time it can be perceived as an attitude that might lead to the creation of two distinct groups of children: the students with SEN and the mainstream students.

It is worth mentioning again, that the language used constantly by the SEN SA throughout the interview can be considered as stigmatising. He constantly differentiated the students attending the ICs from students attending the mainstream full-time as he kept on referring to mainstream schooling and mainstream classes as "canonical school" rather than 'GC' or ICT; which can be perceived as a form of differentiation). He also used the word 'problems' instead of maybe 'difficulties'. He said 'our children' instead of 'the children' possibly creating a gap between mainstream students and those attending the ICs, while

he was advocating that there should be no differentiation between people and that everybody have equal rights. Therefore, in many instances the messages coming from his interview were contradicting his own sayings, understandings or the community's beliefs. It seemed that he was trying to convey the belief that there was no stigma attached to students with SEN when in reality there is stigma around these notions which are embedded within the Greek culture and language.

Overall, according to the HT, the fact that IC was isolated from the GC with a separate teacher in a different class created a gap, in the sense that IC might have been stigmatising as the students in IC might have been perceived as different from their classmates in GC. Cooperation between staff was not observed and could be attributed 1) to ICT's resistance to interact with the rest of the staff and 2) to GCTs' lack of experience or knowledge that restricted them from contributing to the operation of IC. In addition, lack of knowledge and experience, the demanding curriculum and the crowded GCs were some of the factors that prevented GCTs from supporting students with SEN in GCs. In addition there were no scheduled meetings throughout the year to discuss the progress of the students among teachers, parents, students and the local KEDDY. An interesting finding was that the all teachers, parents and students referred to IC as either the tutoring class or the class of Mr. D. Teachers did not use the actual term IC as they thought that students were cruel and using the term IC might produce unwelcome behaviours. Moreover, some participants mentioned that the IC was a 'relief' for GCTs as it removed the 'problem' from the GC and GCTs are 'free' to deliver their lessons without disturbance. The ICT's emphasis in lesson planning was placed on completing learning activities (literacy/mathematics). The ICT's methods did not seem to be based on students' specific learning difficulties or level of individual ability. The teaching pattern could be best characterised as transmission of knowledge from the teacher and the textbook to the students. All parents mentioned that their children were mainly learning in IC as participation in GC was difficult, mainly because the students could not follow the fast pace of the lesson in GC. Students' preferences about the class was based on feelings of belonging or pressure to perform activities. Finally, lack of school transition plans had an impact on students' adjustment in the school environment.

KEDDY

KEDDY as a theme emerged from adults' accounts. Students in their accounts mentioned that they did not recall their visit to KEDDY. KEDDY, as was mentioned before, are the centres that provide diagnosis and support to children and their families in Greece. According to all parents, referral to KEDDY was suggested by the GCT. All parents emphasised that KEDDY had a long waiting list for both diagnosis and for general appointments. They also stated that KEDDY lacked professional staff and provided inadequate support and counselling which resulted in them seeking advice in the private sector. Parents also mentioned that they needed guidance and information to understand how to better support their children, but this was not provided to them as KEDDY were too busy to offer these services. At the same time, parents said that the staff at KEDDY were friendly and cooperative during their visit at KEDDY. Also, Parent B noted that a member of the KEDDY staff phoned her after the diagnosis process was completed to ensure that placement in the IC was certified. Parent A said:

"I do not know if KEDDY can help, they are more towards school and assessment, of course if I need advice or if there is a problem I can call the head of KEDDY, she is cooperative, but I cannot go to the service because they are very busy and you have to book an appointment days in advance."

Therefore, although KEDDY could not operate to their full capacity, based on parents' accounts they made an effort to provide services given the circumstances. It remained a fact though, that support was not optimum and parents or students did not have access to continue or constant consultation or support services. Most importantly, according to the speculations written in SEN policy support should be provided by the local KEDDY; a condition that was not apparent with regards to School A.

Findings suggest that the main communication between the school and KEDDY was through phone conversations to ensure SEN students' placement. The HT stated that KEDDY were cooperative and communicated (by phone) with the school to ensure placement of children at the beginning of each school year. However, their role was limited to practical matters like assessment, diagnosis and placement and did not offer further guidance. The HT stated that he felt free to phone KEDDY to discuss a difficult case but the cooperation between the

school and KEDDY employees was limited mainly again because KEDDY lacked staff, which limited the services they were providing. Therefore, it could be said that KEDDY's intention was to provide what was stated by Law, however, lack of staff and resources was a barrier. It restrained their service's efficiency and minimised any immediate or continues cooperation. Moreover, the knowledge that KEDDY were under-working and had a long waiting list for all the services they provided, was restricting staff from contacting KEDDY for general enquiries and guidance on school matters, according to the HT; a comment that was similar to parents' accounts. The HT stated that communication with KEDDY staff would have been attempted mainly in a case of emergency where a situation might have escalated and school staff would have been unable to manage the situation. It was interesting that the HT had mentioned that in one occasion there was tension with one student and a professional from a PI, appointed by the parents, visited the school and with his guidance the tension was resolved. According to the accounts given by adults, KEDDY had the intention to provide good services, however, lack of staff and resources had restricted their services from operating efficiently.

The ICT, who worked at that time as a part-time SEN teacher at KEDDY, confirmed that the service was understaffed. Therefore, their services were limited to only providing diagnosis; which meant that other services were not available at KEDDY. The ICT also mentioned that the consultation with parents at KEDDY, to present the results of their child's diagnosis usually lasted 15 minutes. It remained unclear whether students also attended these meetings. The ICT also added that, on some occasions, the particular KEDDY could have offered up to two consultation sessions, throughout the year, but after an appointment was scheduled. Furthermore, after an appointment was booked, the members of KEDDY might visit schools to re-assess the progress of the students and ensure that schools were working towards achieving the IPE's goals outlined in the statements. However, based on participants' accounts the waiting list for any appointment at KEDDY was long and communication was mainly through phone. Therefore, it still remains a question whether KEDDY's intention to carry out school visits was in reality achievable.

The SEN SA's comments, when asked about the role of KEDDY were rather antithetical. He said that KEDDY, which were under his jurisdiction, did an

excellent job. However, he also acknowledged they were not adequately staffed; a condition that undermined their efficiency and created a long waiting-list for all the services they provided. More specifically, he said:

“KEDDY are under the SEN SA’s jurisdiction and they work excellently, on the downside they are short-staffed and they are underperforming and since they are understaffed there is a long waiting list.”

It is certainly antithetical to state that a service is excellent but at the same time is underperforming. Therefore, the understanding from the SEN SA’s comments was similar to previous accounts: that in theory the service had the potential to be operating effectively but in practice, due to the above mentioned factors, it was inadequate.

Moreover, there was a mention that the number of diagnoses/statements over the last decade had increased significantly. This was contributed to the fact that nowadays more parents and families agree to take their children to KEDDY. Although, the SC did not mention why ten years before parents would not take their children to IC, it seems that the reasons might be related to notions of stigmatisation or prejudice.

Another interesting comment from Parent A, when she was describing her experience with KEDDY was:

“They told me at KEDDY that many things are written on paper but not everything is implemented in reality.”

That comment was related to the fact that Parent A had applied for SEN in class *parallel support* for her child. However, the request was in progress and the parent was not certain if her request would have been granted given that funds were not available. The parent also mentioned that she knew that according to the Law her child had the legal right to receive in-class support, however, she was uncertain about the outcome of her application given the financial insecurity surrounding SEN education.

The HT, when he was asked about SEN funding replied that the county did not provide funds for SEN. Funds were provided for the whole school and the HT was responsible for allocating the funds based on the school needs.

Over the course of the study, while interviewing the participants at the school, the role and operation of the particular KEDDY became clearer regarding their actual operation in comparison to their responsibilities as stipulated in the SEN policy documents. Therefore, during the collection of data and in order to have a more holistic understanding about KEDDY's operation, it was considered essential to visit KEDDY and include the views of their staff in the study. Unfortunately, the staff at KEDDY were very busy and no appointments for externals were possible. This condition could support the study finding regarding KEDDY being busy and possibly understaffed.

Overall, students were referred to KEDDY by their GCTs. According to the participants there was long waiting list for KEDDY mainly because KEDDY were understaffed. In addition, due to lack of specialists, (like for example psychologists or speech therapists parents) had to travel to other cities to meet the requirements needed to obtain the diagnosis. That was found to be time-consuming, expensive and at times stressful. Lack of support and guidance from KEDDY also led parents to seek support in PI. Annual or follow up meetings during the year were not possible to monitor students' progress. KEDDY's immediate involvement was to ensure students' placement in the beginning of the school year, through phone communication. Closer cooperation between the school and the KEDDY would have attempted in the case that the school was not able to resolve a situation internally. Staff at KEDDY were considered friendly but due to lack of staff at the local KEDDY, closer communication or consultation was not available on regular basis. Finally, while looking at KEDDY's operation, from the participants' point of view, two more themes also emerged: First, the diagnosis, its impact and how it is perceived by the participants and second, the role of PIs and Curriculum.

Diagnosis and Statement

According to parents, diagnosis was a very quick process that took place at the local KEDDY. Some parents had to travel to nearby cities to visit professionals who were not available at the local KEDDY (child psychiatrist or speech therapist) to gather the requirements necessary to obtain the diagnosis. This made the

diagnosis a longer process and was described to be stressful, time-consuming and expensive. Parent B, stated that she did not agree with the initial diagnosis as it was considered by both the parents and the GCT to be generic: it did not address their child's needs accurately. None of the other parents mentioned any discrepancy between KEDDY's suggestions and her family's understandings. According to parents, diagnosis and statement were not followed by annual or term meetings with the KEDDY staff to discuss the progress of their children, or to offer advice and guidance. Therefore, when the ICT mentioned that KEDDY could offer up to two consultation meetings or that they carry out school visits, these services were not evident in School A while the study was carried out. Overall, parents said that the diagnosis did not seem to be stressful for their children. At this point it should be noted again that when students were asked to describe their experience from the diagnosis process at KEDDY they did not recall their visit to the service; Student B said that he only remembered when he went for the first time to the PI.

Parents, as well as the ICT, mentioned that diagnosis made their child's GCTs more aware about the specific needs that their children might have and also eliminated past perceptions. More precisely, the HT and the GCT said that in the past a child with dyslexia might have been perceived by GCTs as lazy, slow or naughty while presently, teachers can possibly attribute certain patterns of behaviour and the difficulties that pupils might be faced with in mainstream schools, to SEN difficulties. However, Parent B mentioned that the GCT had requested a meeting to discuss their child's behaviour. During the meeting, the parents explained to the GCT that their child had a diagnosis and outlined the conditions described in the diagnosis and suggested their child to be moved to the front of the class to minimise distraction. The parent said that the GCT immediately moved the child to the front of the class but no further support was available in the mainstream class apart from attendance in the IC. The parent also referred to the fact that the GCT did not take into consideration the diagnosis as during the meeting the focus was on the child's behaviour that was disturbing the class without taking into account the behaviour of the other children or the child's SEN. Therefore, the parent thought that emphasis should be given on the diagnosis to inform the GCT and ensure that she will be more understanding towards her child.

In addition, GCT C mentioned that Student C's difficult behaviour was due to the fact that he was spoiled. Also, Parent C mentioned that the teachers did not understand the difficulties that her child was experiencing and teachers attributed his difficult behaviour to her parenting skills. Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that in School A, diagnosis possibly made teachers more 'alert' or conscious about students' difficulties and more familiar with the new SEN terminology. However, statements did not contribute to raising awareness at a whole school level or educating all students on SEN matters, as any reference to the IC's actual name was avoided to prevent stigmatisation. Most importantly, it did not inform or enhance teachers' practice and knowledge or led to additional support within the GC, as no planned activities for students with SEN were in place outside IC.

When adult participants referred to diagnosis they all described it as a 'piece of paper' that outlined the needs or the difficulties that their children might be facing at school. However, they all stated that the information outlined at the diagnosis was not enough to help them understand how to support their children and therefore in most cases parents had to seek support outside the KEDDY services. This support was found at the private sector.

According to the HT, diagnosis was just a 'piece of paper' that did not provide information that the GCT was not already aware of. He said that teachers were always aware when a child was struggling at maths or literacy and merely stating in a diagnosis or statement that the child had difficulties with spelling or subtraction did not give further insight to teachers on how to further support the child at a practical level.

The fact that adult participants were constantly referring to the diagnosis as a 'paper', it led to the understanding that the main purpose of the diagnosis and statement was to assign students to the IC given that no extra support was provided within the GC. Furthermore, the content of the statement did not seem to offer significant insight to the teachers on how to provide better support to students with SEN and GCTs' did not seem to be aware or concerned about the diagnosis. Based on informal conversations with two GCTs, whose students (Student B and Student C) attended the IC, they said that diagnoses were all the same. One of the two teachers said:

“They have a template and they tick the boxes, they also always suggest to parents that their children should repeat the same school year because SEN students’ mental age was behind their classmates and repeating the same year will help them to mature and catch-up.”

The other teacher said that diagnoses in general did not represent the students’ actual needs and she added that the work performed by KEDDY was not very professional:

“They never give directions and always suggest to the GCTs to find the means to cope with the students.”

Teachers’ beliefs might possibly explain the reasons that they did not focus on the content of the statement and did not tailor their practice based on KEDDY’s suggestions. This attitude can also suggest that GCTs might not have valued KEDDY’s input or possibly devaluing KEDDY’s suggestions might have been used as an ‘excuse’ to justify their lack of involvement in SEN provision.

Moreover, the HT and the ICT believed that there was a number of parents that wished their children to obtain this ‘paper’ as it provided oral examination, to their children, in the national exams. The national exams are very important to the Greek families, as students’ performance on these exams will qualify or disqualify them from entering higher education -university. In the Greek society there is a general belief that students with statements have easier access to the university by taking oral exams. Oral exams are more flexible, therefore it is believed that some families seek to obtain a statement for their children in order to more easily secure a place in the university. In the particular study, it was obvious that parents’ primary concern was to obtain a statement for their children in order to certify additional support within the mainstream school.

In addition, the HT stated that a diagnosis could lead to stigma. For instance, he believed, according to his experience, that a child diagnosed with learning difficulties, with proper support by the school and family, could have coped with the school demands without having to obtain a diagnosis. Having a diagnosis could lead to stigma as the child will always carry the label and will be perceived as different from the rest of the students. However, this view was contrasting with views by all parents, including the HT, the GCT, the SEN SA and the ICT who said that the curriculum in mainstream classes is so demanding that the students

with SEN cannot cope without extra support, given that even the most highly achieving students find school demands very challenging.

Furthermore, according to the study findings, a diagnosis could possibly minimise mainstream teachers' expectations. GCT A said that she had fewer expectations from Student A who had a statement. The HT on the same matter said:

“It is a ‘paper’ that makes teachers understand that and that this child should be given more care, not only it helps to be less demanding but the teachers should also try to support the child for example with spelling, in basic stuff, you cannot do more, basic things...”

Therefore, diagnosis as a theme based on the participants' views is associated with notions of stigma, lower expectations from teachers, a way to achieve better results at national exams by having oral exams and as a process that was described as straight forward, but the outcome of the diagnosis did not provide sufficient insights to parents or teachers in order to support their children and students. The latter was attributed to the fact that the diagnosis was very generic and did not follow any further recommendations and advice over practical matters (for example, coping strategies). On the positive side, a diagnosis could enhance knowledge and inform teachers' approaches or perceptions around SEN matters. Even if this understanding, based on the study findings, seemed to be in its early stages, it is still a step forward compared to past perceptions and pedagogical approaches held by teachers.

Private Institute and Curriculum

PI and curriculum emerged as a theme during the initial interviews with the parents and then was followed up while interviewing the rest of the participants. PIs became relevant to the study as all parents mentioned that their children attended PI after school hours, student participants during the interviews referred to their PIs tutors and also teacher participants referred to the PIs. More precisely, this theme was related to and emerged from participants' accounts that referred to the PIs as an outcome 1) of lack of specialised staff in both public services like KEDDY and in mainstream classes 2) the demanding national curriculum that

was applied in Greek schools and 3) the distress and pressure towards academic achievement in schools. PIs in Greece can be divided into two categories:

1. specialised services in SEN matters, called generally 'centres', with a range of professionals who also provide counselling, support and guidance to parents and children. These centres are equipped with resources that can assist children to overcome barriers in their learning and also provide tutoring to cope with the demands of the mainstream curriculum
2. PIs specialised in providing tutoring to all students, in order to cope with mainstream school demands and national school exams. These types of institutes are called *frodistiria* in Greek and aim to coach students and provide extra tuition in core subjects like literature, maths, science, foreign languages and music. Also, there are many private after-school sport clubs that can be placed under the umbrella term: *Frodistiria*

In both categories private tutors for core subjects or music and foreign languages, as well as, SEN professionals also offer services to students at students' houses or professionals' private offices.

Based on the participants' accounts, students with SEN attended both types of PI. Adult participants attributed this decision to a lack of personnel at KEDDY to provide advice, consultation and specialised services to their children. These factors led parents to seek assistance in the private sector. In addition, over the years, the over demanding, detailed and complicated curriculum, that could not be taught in depth in the schools, had directed the Greek public opinion towards the belief that if students did not receive extra tuition at the *frodistiria* they would have either failed at national exams or pupils would have achieved less at school. Therefore, the general perception that students needed to attend *frodistiria* to achieve at mainstream school has been embedded within the Greek culture and mentality. Attending a PI is not seen as an option but as a one-way educational path for all Greek pupils in order to achieve academically. This has a very high financial cost for all households and suggests that the governmental and constitutional claims for free public education were not actual. Moreover, students with SEN who were already struggling at school, had an extra barrier to overcome and cope with: private tutoring. This also generated further stress as pupils had

homework to complete for both mainstream (GC and IC) and for the various *frodistiria* or SEN centres they attend including foreign languages, sport clubs or music. Moreover, *frodistiria* are always held at after-school hours and can be long and exhausting for students. This can have an immediate impact on the happiness and wellbeing of both the children and their parents. When Student B was asked if he had school work to do at home and how he felt about it, he replied:

“I get tired, I study until nine o’clock and we always study all the lessons for the next day and everyday I study until late. I also go to the Centre, do dancing, music and many more things.”

The parent of the particular student mentioned that Student B’s schedule was very demanding as every day after school he was either attending the *Frodistirio* for English (twice a week), the SEN centre (three times a week) and he also did music and traditional dances throughout the week. The mother of the student recognised that the schedule was overloaded, but considered it to be necessary. The parent also mentioned that due to the heavy schedule all her attention was directed towards her son and she did not have enough time to devote to her other child:

“She can manage herself so she does not need me as much”, referring to her other child.

Student A’s GCT mentioned that when they had a planned test at school many students complained that they did not have time for school tests as they had lots of homework for their private schools. The GCT added:

“Children do private lessons at home to manage all the school workload. The Ministry is asking too much and the parents are fixated with grades, I call it grademania.”

The ICT commented on the matter that he was not aware of the work that was performed at the SEN centres but he said that it would have been good if there was some form of cooperation between schools and private centres. He also said:

“The private centres are not accountable if the role of the school is diminished but the parents. There is definitely a need for every IC in each school, provision is necessary.”

The ICT was referring to the fact that parents in general believed that the work performed in public schools was not sufficient, therefore, parents enrolled their children in various *frodistiria* to ensure that they will learn more and receive better

grades. He was also referring to the fact that SEN provision that was offered in mainstream schools was not adequate and more to that not every school had an IC, therefore, parent inevitably looked for support in the private sector. The SEN SA also stressed the fact that there was a need for more ICs in the public mainstream schools.

Moreover, two of the parents mentioned that there was a public SEN vocational school in the city but it was also understaffed and sometimes their hours did not comply with school hours or the service did not meet the pupils' needs. More precisely, Parent C said that she tried to enrol her child in that service, however she said that:

"They only offered half an hour per week, but the teacher was on leave for a month and there was no-one to cover for that teacher, so we tried the public service but nothing was achieved so we turned to the specialists."

The choice of the word 'specialist' was interesting, as it implied that the work carried out at the public services was not viewed as professional. According to Parent C:

"A self-employed professional makes more effort and has stamina and will also provide IEPs, something that you do not find in public services."

When Parent A was asked why they chose to go to a PI, given they already had the diagnosis form KEDDY, the mother replied:

"To understand how to get my child's attention."

Moreover, it was very interesting that when Parent B was asked why her family initially decided to visit a PI, she said that they were not aware of any services offered in the public sector. The other two parents were both aware about the public services, however, they both stated that they felt more secure in the private sector, for the reasons that were outlined above. However, it is very important that all parents are well-informed regarding the choices that were offered to them by the state⁶. The HT on the subject said that:

⁶ In addition, it became apparent that not even the parents communicated with each other to discuss about their children's options, their experiences or their views about the IC and the work that is performed there, given that all parents shared a similar experience. In School A it seemed that SEN was a personal 'struggle' rather than a collective practice

“KEDDY do not have time for diagnosis, more to that to accept parents for consultation or advice...That is why parents go out in private centres, we have students that go there...”

Moreover, Parent B noted that due to the tuition her child was receiving at a PI, she had noticed an improvement in terms of concentration and performance at home. She also said that Student B felt more confident and less confused at school mainly because of the work that was accomplished in a PI, as well as in the IC. It boosted his confidence which allowed him to feel more able to participate in class or at group games. However, the GCTs (Student A, Student B and Student C) in the formal interview and informal conversations mentioned that their students with SEN were not included in the games with the students and that they were struggling in class. Therefore, the question is whether the PIs are as beneficial for students or for the parents and whether they boost parents' confidence or students or both? It also raises the issue again about communication between parents and teachers.

Curriculum was also one of the emerging themes of this study. It became relevant due to participants' accounts as it was described as a barrier to learning for all students but especially the students that were classified as SEN. In addition, the demanding curriculum also restricted the quality of lesson delivered by the mainstream teachers and also minimised the time spent with the students with SEN.

According to all participants, the curriculum was very demanding, lengthy, highly academic and very challenging for all students and especially to the students that were struggling at school as the expectations were really high. All parents and teachers raised concerns about the curriculum and emphasised the fact that it was impossible for students with SEN to fully access it, which created a sense of failure.

The overcrowded curriculum had also created the need for students to attend after-school PIs (as was mentioned before) as the time that was provided in class for delivery and comprehension was not adequate. Therefore, students needed

and endeavour initiated by parents in order to bring everyone together, raise awareness and move practice forward.

to work hard after school hours in order to 'catch up' with homework and go over what they were taught in school in the morning to ensure that they would be ready for the next day's class.

Parent B mentioned that she had noticed that her child was introduced to notions in mathematics that she as a student was taught in secondary school. Therefore, when the interview with the HT was scheduled he was also asked about curriculum:

"The current curriculum has been reduced compared to previous textbooks but not as much as we would have wanted... There is not enough time for recap within the timeline we have, we always run to catch up and even that is not enough to cover all the work."

When GCT A was asked about the curriculum she expressed the following views:

"The curriculum is excessive, we need to reduce it based on our own judgement... Especially in maths, the textbook was horrendous, and there were activities that I could not understand how to execute myself, imagine the children... The curriculum has become very specialised..."

As it was discussed before, the existence of PIs in Greece contradicts any notion of free and public education that should be provided to all students according to the Greek constitution and laws. In addition, the concept of PI is truly a paradox given that pupils learn at PIs what they should have been learning during school hours from their GCTs. More to that, the work that is performed in *frodistiria* is based on the mainstream curriculum and many teachers who work as private tutors and go through with students in the afternoon, at home, what students were taught in the morning at school.

Parents' concerns and children's wellbeing:

All the concerns, expressed by parents, were immediately related to their children's wellbeing. Parents described occasions and gave examples of the steps they took in order to ensure that their children were getting the most out of what the educational system was providing. It was very powerful at times listening to parents' efforts in trying to understand their children's needs, how well they

knew their children and how hard they worked to ascertain their needs were met at school and understood by the teachers.

Parent A said that, during the first two years, she used to go to school assemblies and school trips. Her child was sensitive to loud noises and she wanted to ensure that if her child expressed discomfort she would have been there to assist him or walk him out of the room. The same parent also said that during the same time she used to go at break-times as there were incidents of bullying and she was worried about his safety and wellbeing.

Parent B mentioned that she was very concerned about her child's wellbeing and safety at school as on many occasions her child had returned from school crying and was refusing to go back due to incidents with classmates. Those incidents, as described by the parents in different parts of the interview, included name-calling, physical fights with classmates, being locked in the school toilets. In addition, according to Parent B her child was falsely accused by the teachers about things he did not do. That was attributed to the fact that her child's learning difficulties had prevented him from fully expressing himself which had led to distress and immature behaviour.

Student B said:

"Sometimes I ask Miss something and they do not let me say it, they do not listen to me and then I scream so they can listen to me."

Parent C also said that she was concerned about the fact that her child did not have friends at school and during break-times he was alone or he was with the teachers on duty because he felt safer. She also said:

"Toilet is a problem, his motor skills are underdeveloped and he finds it difficult to pull down his trousers and he might soil or wet himself and no-one is there to help him, I am concerned about his safety...I had to come to school and assist him as the other children used to kick him, pull down his underpants and make fun of him..."

Parents believed that if the students were more aware and the teachers better trained on SEN matters and individual differences, many negative incidents might have been avoided. They also mentioned that all teachers should have been responsible for children's safety in order to certify that everyone had friends and they were well looked after at school.

From parents' accounts, as it was mentioned before, it become apparent that students might not have been well monitored during break-times. Parents' descriptions raised questions and touched on sensitive issues regarding safety, wellbeing and bullying. How inclusive practice was understood and implemented by staff and how staff were allocated to certify that all students' needs were met in class and during the break-time?

According to the students' accounts when the questions referred to friendships, they all replied that they did not have friends or they wanted more friends. More precisely, when Student C was asked if he had friends at school he said yes and he mentioned some of his friends' names. But, when I asked him which games he preferred to play with those friends at break-time he said:

"We do not play together, they avoid me, they do not play with me, they always run away."

Then the student was asked what he mostly liked to do at break-time and he said that he did not want to be with his classmates:

"I like to be with the teachers, I feel safer."

The student at that point seemed to be uncomfortable with the questions as he started to move anxiously around the room. Therefore, I chose not to further question the student on this matter at that time. When the student was asked again at the end of the interview about his friends, he said that he did not want to talk more about it as we talked before about his friends.

During observations Student C was seen to be either alone or in the company of the teachers on duty. Student A and Student D were also observed to be mainly alone. When Student D was asked about friendships he said:

"I would like to have my friend here but she is in another school. I used to have a friend but she does not want to play with me anymore. But, I have a good time at school."

While we were talking about the IC, she mentioned that sometimes two of her classmates in IC were annoying her at times, therefore I asked her if someone else was annoying her and she said:

"Only one child is picking on me, once he threw my juice and croissant and then stepped on them."

All these raise issues about how inclusion is understood in Greece. Whether it is about placement and academic development or about wellbeing and safety or both? And how are duties and responsibilities allocated to safeguard pupils' wellbeing? These are important issues that will be discussed later in detail.

Summary of personal observations and understandings

My first impression when I visited school A's IC was rather unsatisfactory. The room size was very small (it could accommodate maximum four students), which at the moment was sufficient because the class had only four students in total. The computer in the room was not working and walls were empty (no artwork or students' 'paintings'). The ICT had to bring his own laptop when he needed to do activities provided through internet. However, there were some board games and puzzles for students to use possibly in their free time. However, there were not enough resources to support students' learning.

The class environment was convivial. The ICT seemed to have developed good relations with the students. Although, it was quite apparent from the first day of my observations that there was some tension with two of the students; an issue that seemed to be resolved during the time I was doing the school observations.

Some of the issues that led me to define ICs operation as nebulous in the particular setting were: the ICT's pedagogical approaches, the number of hours that students spend in the IC, the cooperation between the ICT and the GCTs and the school's infrastructure.

According to the legislation the purpose of inclusive practice (which was mainly expressed through the operation of IC) was to develop a holistic understanding of themselves; to assist students to reach their potential in order to be fully included in the GCTs without attending the IC; to promote and maintain students' full acceptance and inclusion in their school, community and later on in their workplace; to promote equal opportunities to all students and remove possible barriers to students' learning (e.g. provide proper infrastructure, resources).

The pedagogical approach followed by the ICT was based mainly on academic criteria. The context of the lessons was arranged in such a way to provide students grammatical and mathematical knowledge as for them to be able to follow their peers in the GC. The lesson delivery did not involve any interactive methods. Most of the times, students were given a number of tasks to complete (grammatical or numerical) until the end of the didactic hour. After the completion of each task the students were expected to give the right answers to the ICT. When the answers were correct students proceeded to the next task; when students found it difficult to complete a particular task the ICT provided them additional information or instructions. The tasks were not individualised to address each student's specific learning needs. In addition, students were given everyday homework to complete on top of the homework given by their GCT. In general, the lesson delivery has been very traditional in character and very similar to that one performed in GCs. Therefore, lessons in the IC could be better described as private tutoring which focuses on improving students' skills to finally achieve better academically—in many cases, this could also be the outcome of parents' pressure aiming to see their children achieving better marks.

The number of hours spent in ICs in the particular school for each student was 10-15. The school day in Greek primary schools starts at 8.10 and finishes at 12.30 or 13.30 (students in KS1 finish at 12.30 while students in KS2 at 13.30); this means that students receive either four or five hours of schooling every day. One KS1 student had everyday three hours in the IC and one to two hours in the GC. This meant that most of the student's day was in the IC receiving one-to-one tutoring, since he was the only KS1 (Student D) in the school. However, the particular arrangements were seem to hinder the development of the student's social skills as to become an integrated part of his GC and school community. This become more apparent in break-times were the student was mostly observed playing alone or be attached to the break-time supervisors.

The cooperation between the ICT and the GCTs was limited. Even in cases were tension was observed in IC and GC with particular students (also reported in individual conversations by the students' GCT) no communication was observed to occur between the students' teachers in order to resolve the issue or form a common plan of action or even discuss possible curriculum modifications that may be required to adapt to students' unique learning profile. The IC seemed to

operate as a separate unit within the class. Even in break-times there was not much interaction between the ICT and the GCTs. However, this seemed to put barriers to the contribution of this inclusive setting to the whole school in terms of raising awareness around SEN issues and minimised the IC's involvement in whole school activities. Therefore, the IC seemed to be viewed by teachers and operate as a special unit within the school rather as an integrated part of the whole school's culture.

Finally, the infrastructure and the resources were inadequate in order to facilitate students' needs. Both of the school's entrances had steps with no ramps or grab bars to provide accessible route to the building for students with physical difficulties. The class size was significantly small which made any type of activities that required students to move around the class impossible. The resources were insufficient to assist students' learning (e.g. computer, interactive boards or special aids: visual aids, colored maps or laminated cards).

Summary of the findings from School A

One of the main reasons that the study was welcomed by School A was because the adult participants hoped that the study would have helped to change some of the inequalities that they have been experiencing. The parents said that they felt for the first time that someone was giving them attention and they felt happy to have shared their experience and views and thanked me for making the effort to present their reality.

All parents seemed to be very clear about the expectations they had from their children. They wanted them to be happy, have friends, be safe and progress academically. Although their children's wellbeing was considered to be a priority, maintaining academic, social and life skills was also very crucial to them in order to safeguard their children's future.

Parent A said that her main expectation for Student A was to become independent and obtain life and social skills and belong to a group of friends. Academically, the parent's expectations for Student A, was to complete mandatory education. Parent A emphasised that due to her personal endeavours

it became possible for her child to receive professional support tailored to her child's needs within and outside the school setting. According to the findings the state provision was insufficient due to lack of funds and resources.

Parent C also raised this point that her personal efforts were the main factor that lead to faster results in terms of the support her child was receiving within and outside the school. Bureaucracy, lack of services and information was restricting parents' endeavours who strived to provide the best conditions to meet their children's needs within the mainstream.

Parent B appeared to be very focused on academic achievements. As a result, Student B was studying long hours after school and attending a PI in order to develop and progress academically. At the same time, Parent B expressed strongly her concern about her child's safety providing examples of incidents of bullying at school.

Parent C expressed strongly her discomfort regarding her child's safety and lack of friendships at school. Similar to Parent A and B, Parent C attributed this to the teachers' lack of knowledge, training and approaches, as well as, to the lack of SEN awareness in the whole school in order to close the gap and provide effective inclusion within the mainstream school.

According to the findings, lack of training and SEN awareness was identified as an educational gap which is essential to be tackled, in future, in order for inclusion to become more efficient in mainstream schools. The findings suggested that GCTs had a general understanding regarding IC's operation and general knowledge on SEN matters, a condition that restricted them from applying effective pedagogical approaches to meet all students' needs within the mainstream school. Constant and practical SEN training for all teachers (including SEN teachers) is required to improve teachers' skills and enhance teachers' pedagogical methods.

Parent C expressed her disappointment regarding her child's slow learning progress. The parent believed that the years spent in the PI and in the IC should have been more beneficial in terms of learning development.

The ICT mentioned that, based on his overall experience as an ICT , most parents' expectation for their children was to gradually move full-time in the GC,

which according to the ICT was not always possible. However, parents during interviews said that their expectation was to see their children progressing academically and be happy and all of them said they were aware that their children would need extra support throughout the school.

The interview with Parent D was not possible, but Student D mentioned that he had repeated Year 1 in order to mature academically and personally; that was a parental decision. Parent C also mentioned that her intention was for her child to repeat the same academic year as learning objectives were not met and the child's learning development was slow, which would have prevented Student C from accessing the next year's school curriculum. In addition, the findings (from both observations and interviews) suggested that parents tended to complete their children's homework in order for the students to appear more skilful. Those findings indicate the tendency and significance that families placed on academic achievements or the parents' need to demonstrate their children's progress by completing their homework. Even parents who placed emphasis on the fact that their main objective was their child's wellbeing, were completing their children's homework, according to the ICT. Findings suggest that this tendency was due to the society's perceptions who wanted all students to appear as 'good students'.

Academic achievements remained an objective for all parents, as based on the data the higher the grade that students received at school, the higher the status of the student and the family. The IC was perceived as a reception stage that would prepare students with SEN to gradually return full-time to GC. Findings also suggest that the use of the term IC was considered to be stigmatising as it was suggesting that students might be less able than their classmates or that they may have required 'special' support from 'special' teachers which was viewed as being 'different'. In support of these findings the ICT said that:

“Many parents do not want to admit that their child might have certain learning difficulties, they prefer to say coaching class than to think that a special teacher is working with their children. This behaviour is not helping anyone... There was a mother that did not want to talk to me so people will not say that her child had a problem.”

Findings suggest that the Greek educational system is tailored towards academic achievements that create high expectations in terms of school performance to students. This has been described as a major stress for all students in

mainstream schools and especially for students with SEN. According to the findings, the Greek mentality for high grades in combination with the demanding curriculum was putting restraints on teachers' work. GCTs were forced to deliver the curriculum within given timeframes that limit their ability to go over certain core topics to ensure that all students' learning objectives were met or focus more in meeting their students' needs rather the curriculum deadlines. In the 'race' for higher grades, parents rely on PIs to achieve the highest results for the next school term. The GCT used the term 'grademania' to refer to parents' perceptions towards grades. In support of this the ICT commented:

"80% of parents or even more are concerned about the grades, a good grade means that they can say to their friends that their child got a good grade which increases the 'status' of the family."

Overall, the findings suggested that the operation and the nature of ICs as an expression of inclusion was not successful. Inclusion as it was described in the introduction was not evident in the school. Some of the school staff were oriented towards inclusion as a whole school practice, however, lack of knowledge and experience regarding SEN (as identified by the participants), restricted them from being involved actively in the IC activities and provision for SEN. The school staff diverted the responsibility to the ICT and remained passive in terms of students' academic progress. SEN practice was only found in IC and the ICT did not engage with the mainstream activities. Students learning SEN were supported only within the ICT and their participation in IC did not have evident benefits in terms of social aspects of inclusion. Overall, inclusion as it was described in the introduction was not evident in the school. This was attributed to various factors: based on external, internal and surrounding factors. Those factors are outlined here:

- 1) external factors: the services that have been established to support the successful implementation of ICs and inclusion in the mainstream school were not available or were insufficient (KEDDY, SEN SA)
 - a. insufficiencies at KEDDY are located in the fact that, the waiting lists for both diagnosis and consultation were long, limited staff, lack of specialised staff, generic diagnosis and lack of support
 - b. insufficiencies regarding the post of SEN SA, are located in the fact that there was no school visits, cooperation with the school, limited

assessment, monitoring and training. There was no provision for transition

2) internal factors: ICT as an implementer of inclusive practice and philosophy

- a. inclusive practice → learning aspects: The main activity in the IC was the acquisition of academic knowledge (literacy and mathematics) or skills (learn how to hold the pencil). Its character can be better described as a *frodistirio* within the mainstream school. For the students who attended the IC as a group, the ICT did not differentiate the activities based on their individual needs or the Year group. The ICT did not liaise with the GCTs to plan and decide on activities. SEN provision was only situated within the IC –no provision in the GC-. There was no provision for transition
- b. inclusive practice → social aspects: All aspects of SEN were situated within the IC. There was no collaboration with the GCT on joined social activities. The ICT did not interact with the students in the mainstream or with the GCTs. The IC did not provide any activities on social skills in ICT. The IC was isolated. The students of IC were marginalised, but no actions were taken by the ICT or the rest of the staff to engage the students in games during play-time. No cooperation with parents to effectively address their concerns

3) surrounded factors:

- a. curriculum: The excessive nature of the curriculum that needed to be delivered every day restricted GCTs from focusing students with SEN. The context of the curriculum was so demanding that students with SEN could not follow it. The nature of the curriculum reinforces an achievements oriented practice. Achievements put pressure on students who attend PI to cope with the demands of the curriculum.
- b. lack of SEN knowledge by staff: Restricted GCTs from supporting students in the GC; this was used as an explanation for the lack of engagement with the IC or the cooperation with the ICT. Participants expressed the need for training on practical issues, not theoretical seminars that define SEN

- c. diagnosis: very generic. It did not assist in planning or supported the practice. Stigmatising

Students and IC: Overall outcomes for the students who attended the IC:

- The immediate benefits from students' participation in ICT were not clear. Learning progress can be considered as the main beneficial outcome. However, due to the fact that all students attended *frodistiria* outside of the school hours, it is difficult to clearly specify if the progress was due to IC or both IC and PI? Some of the students said that they made progress and they have learned more in IC. However, they expressed the same opinion about the PI. According to parents progress was attributed to their children's participation in both IC and PI. However, all parents mentioned that more progress needed to be made or that they initially expected more progress. All parents said that their children did progress in the GC. This was attributed to the fact that their children could not follow the curriculum and progress in the GC seemed always slow or it was not evident.
- IC as an expression of the philosophy of inclusion in the particular school was not achieved, especially because it did not support students' social development and engagement. These were apparent through the following: Incidents of bullying, lack of friends, not involved in games during play-time and also the students who attended the IC as a group did not play together during break-time. Based on the findings, it cannot be suggested that the incidents of bullying or the lack of friends was due to the students' participation in IC or other factors like for example, identified as a distinct group: students with SEN. However, the presence of the ICT in the school as an implementer of inclusive practices did not create the circumstances that would support students' engagement in the school environment or prevent bullying and marginalisation. Students' general views about the IC and the ICT varied. These were understood in terms of feelings of acceptance or belonging or feeling safe and based on the setting that they felt more comfortable or relaxed. Overall, students did not say that they did not want to participate in IC.

SEN policy documents

In this section the changes in the stipulation of the Law 3699 and Law 2817 that were reviewed in Chapter 2, as well as supplementary SEN policy documents that proved relevant to the study, are reviewed in this section. These SEN policy documents are conceptualised taking into consideration the study findings with a focus on how the above legislative changes have been implemented and practiced within School A where the case study took place. Therefore, the supplementary policy documents that proved relevant to the study included: 1) The Government Gazette Issue (GGG) in 2007 regarding the duties and responsibilities of the ICTs and the HTs (GGG 449, 2007) and 2) the SEN Curriculum in 1996 (GGG/PAPEA, 1996).

Based on the data from School A, the IC was neither suitable (small room) nor well-structured (lack of resources). In addition, the GCTs have all stated that the large number of students in their classes did not allow them to devote their attention to the students with SEN. Moreover, no further adaptations have been made for the students with SEN in the GCs. The cooperation between the staff was not evident and the SEN SA was very busy supporting five counties and almost 300 school units to provide support to GCTs and the ICT. According to the Law, the particular SEN SA should only have supported one county. The KEDDY have been overly busy due to a lack of staff and they were underperforming with long waiting lists for the parents. The diagnosis was described generic and did not provide insightful information for both parents and teachers. Due to shortages in staff (for example child psychiatric), parents had to travel to other cities in order to gather all the documents needed to obtain the diagnosis. Finally, no IEPs were evident during the time the study was conducted. Overall, it seems certainly impossible for SEN SA and KEDDY to provide quality provision to any of the schools that are in their province. Therefore, the limited human resources certainly minimise the particular role in terms of providing quality services to all their schools and centres. It is essentially important for the government to appoint more personnel to support the purpose of the particular post or find alternative ways of providing advice to schools when they need support (for instance, appoint school psychologists). Finally, it should be noted that none of the adult participants had read the laws that have been presented in

this thesis. This was justified on the basis that if a new practice relevant to their post becomes effective they will be briefed. However, it is rather complicated to follow a policy that is constantly revised or adaptations are made in the form of GGGs. This understanding is not meant to justify the fact that participants were not familiar with the laws given that in School A the HT mentioned that all policy documents were located in a designated area in the staff office.

Duties and responsibilities of the ICTs

According to the Presidential Decree 449 (GGG, 2007), the duties and the responsibilities of the SEN teachers and the HT are provided. The duties and responsibilities of the ICTs are specified. In the following the list of duties of the ICTs are provided at first level based on the policy document and at second level in relation to the study findings.

The ICTs duties and responsibilities are:

- 1) Assess students SEN based on the GCTs reports. The ICT decides the students' participation in the IC based
 - on the severity of their SEN
 - the need for IEP
 - the student's age and the GC they attend and
 - the number of students that the ICT have the capacity to support
- 2) They inform in collaboration with the HT the parents of the student about the steps that need to be taken in order for their child to attend the IC.
 - participation in the IC will not be denied, under any circumstance, if the parents wish their child to participate in the IC but the child does not have a diagnosis. In these cases the approval of the SEN SA is sufficient
- 3) Cooperate with the GCTs to plan the IEPs and the ways to actualise the goals of IEPs, ensuring that the context is relevant to both settings.
 - The aim remains the full inclusion of the student in the school environment.

- 4) Support students' engagement and adjustment in the whole school environment with the students' participation in group learning activities, games and other school activities.
- 5) Regularly update the students' personal files which are securely stored. The HT is responsible to ensure that the files are secure. The files include:
 - medical and family background information
 - statements and diagnosis
 - in the case that a student is transferred to another school, the file should include suggestions and explanations of the students' IEP
- 6) Inform and advice the members of the school staff on SEN matters and cooperate with the SEN SAs of their local country and the local KEDDY.
- 7) They plan and submit to the SEN SA for approval and assessment the weekly timetable and the annual IC's report.
- 8) They offer their services to students that attend colocated schools or provide *parallel support* as proved or instructed by the SEN SA.

In relation to the data from interviews and observations in School A, it can be suggested that most of the duties and responsibilities as described above were not evident. More precisely and in relation to above stipulations starting from the third it can be said that:

- 1) All students received the same activities even if their SEN differ. Cooperation was not observed at any time and GCTs were not aware about their students' actual difficulties and they did not make arrangements to accommodate the students' needs in the GC.
- 2) Provision for transition and adjustment to IC (or any other setting) was found to be lacking in the school, creating a stressful environment for both students and parents, as well as, reluctance to attend the IC. In terms of the social aspects of learning, the ICT's time, during the breaks, was spent in the IC and no other activities were planned by the ICT that involved the whole school. Only once the ICT, mentioned that he preferred the students not to attend IC during the PE so they can be with their classmates. Apart from the ICTs actual involvement in any activity outside the IC was absent.

3) The researcher was not allowed access to any personal or school reports, however, in the absence of cooperation between staff it can be suggested that the files were not systematically updated based on students' progress in the GC.

4) Any type of information and advice to the school staff and the community on SEN matters was not evident during the time spent in the school. According to the findings there should have been some type of cooperation with the KEDDY given that the ICT was working part-time in the local KEDDY. There was no cooperation with the SEN SA apart of the planned annual meetings with all the SEN staff in the county in the beginning and end of the academic year.

5) Regarding the reports the ICT said that: *"ICTs have to fill in forms in in the end of the year that no one ever sees as the SEN SA is very busy."* The IC did mention that he decided about the timetable himself. In relation to that, an interesting observation was that in certain occasions, the ICT modified the students' timetable to suit his own timetable (might have provided extra hours or less hours to the students or different hours during the school day).

Overall, the duties and the responsibilities of the ICTs are rather generic in the sense they do not explain the means to achieve the goals specified. Moreover, there are some generic statements that are subject to interpretation and ICTs personal understandings. For instance, what is meant by the statement: The aim remains the full inclusion of the student in the school environment? Is that the aim that the state is promoting? What does full inclusion means? How is it going to be achieved? What are the criteria that will determine the full-inclusion? The list of questions can be long. What the policy document failed to provide is another list with the actions (monitoring, assessment, funding, resources) that the state will take in order to ensure duties and the responsibilities are possible, understood and performed. In addition, there are no suggestions in the GGG (2007) that give examples of good practice or suggest the means to be used to actualise those eight duties. How does the ICT inform parents? Through seminars, meetings, projects? In addition, it does not specify between duties and responsibilities. If it is a duty then ICTs are obliged to comply, but if it is a responsibility then they are based on the teacher's personality and availability. The participants mentioned that good practice depends on teachers (they can be passive or active). In addition, in the absence of systematic assessment and

monitoring of the ICs the final word and decisions about the operation of ICs was taken by the teacher.

Therefore, it seems that within the highly centralised Greek educational system the IC in School A operated as a local independent establishment (within the public education) where the curriculum was not set and the timetable varied. The ICT mentioned that lack of a set curriculum planned by the Ministry of Education for ICs was restricting his practice. That was explained on the basis that ICTs did not have a common practice, most ICTs were basing their teaching on personal understandings and knowledge rather than following a common educational model for SEN. However, while searching for supplementary documents in order to better understand certain omissions identified in the laws, I came across the SEN curriculum (PAPEA) that has been designed by the GPI. It is very interesting that the curriculum was designed and came into effect during the school year 1996-1997. In 2009, the same curriculum has been republished with the exact same content. The only difference between the PAPEA 2009 and the PAPEA 1996 was the last page that referred to the significance of the SEN curriculum and stressed that the document was designed with care. It was also stressed that its context has been supported by other well-developed countries with a single reference to the UK Every Child Matters Children Act in 2004. Within PAPEA there are guidelines that describe the aspects of learning and development where attention should be given in order to assess and monitor students' development and progress. However, PAPEA (that follows a medical model) takes more the form of assessment of students' abilities, skills and needs, rather than a material that can be used to plan the daily lesson. This was the aspect that the ICT was referring to. A non-systematic and not well-planned policy framework reflects a non-systematic and not well-organised education, personnel, students and society. If the policy has omissions then the educational system will be ineffective and eventually students will be disadvantaged. In the following chapter, the discussion will be presented.

Chapter five: Discussion

The discussion chapter will be divided in two sections and will conceptualise the findings of the study in relation to the analysis of Greek laws and place them within the former and current Greek socio-political context. The discussion refers to an understanding of '*vague inclusive educational realities*', which consists of two components: '*vague practices*' and '*vague inclusion*'. The second section will draw the final conclusions based on the findings and will attempt to identify ways forward.

Rationale that led to the understanding of the 'vague inclusive realities'

Going back to the research questions and interests, the findings suggest that the establishment of IC as an expression of inclusion was not successfully implemented within School A. The IC was not incorporated within School A and the ICT was not actively involved in the overall activities within the school. The IC was rather isolated and perceived as the designated setting that provided SEN provision to students with SEN (with no SEN provision within the GC). Its operational character was limited to the transmission and acquisition of knowledge: from the ICT and the textbook or the materials to the students, an operational character similar to that of the GC. The outcomes of students' participation in IC were mainly academic. The ICT did not create the circumstances within the school environment that would allow the IC to be viewed as an extension of the GC, where all teachers collaborate and cooperate; it was rather viewed as an external unit with external supervision. Whether students benefited from their participation in IC does not have a straight forward answer, it is subject to views of *paideia* and schooling. If parents' and schools' expectations and views are tailored for example, towards 'grademania' (GCT A's views of most parents' tendencies), then it could be said that students benefited from the extra tuition in IC. However, participant parents were very explicit about

their concerns and expectations of friendships and the HT and GCT A considered school as the setting that places priority on students' wellbeing, friendships and socialisation. Nevertheless, provision for the social and emotional aspects of learning, in School A, was not apparently based on the study findings; for example, students of IC were mostly alone during play-time.

Therefore, a set of new questions has emerged for further exploration in future research: Why was SEN provision only located in the IC? Why was the IC isolated from the rest of the school? Why did the students who attended the IC not have friends both outside and inside the IC? Which are the factors that have led to this situation?

With regards to the data and findings from this case study, an explanation at first level might have already been provided in the data, by the SEN SA. More precisely, during the final interview that was with the SEN SA, the above findings had already become apparent through observations and interviews. Therefore, it was considered important to discuss these issues with the SEN SA.

The SEN SA said that there was no stigma attached to the students who attend the IC. Stigma was attached to students only when they were treated differently and there was no cooperation between the staff within the same school. He then said that stigma is demolished when all parents and students are well-informed and well aware about SEN matters. Given the study findings, cooperation between services and within School A was minimum to absent and students were treated differently, participants were not well-informed and students were rather misinformed about the true nature of the IC. Planned actions to raise awareness within the school, at the time of the study, were not observed. Does that mean, according to the SEN SA, that stigma did actually exist in School A since none of his theoretical suggestions and or practical solutions were observed or recorded in School A? It is interesting though, that SEN SA is one of the main people responsible for monitoring the ICs and ensure that schools are well-informed. In the case of School A, the SEN SA did not seem to be well aware about the conditions in the school. Similar explanations and solutions have been given from other scholars with regards to inclusion and its implementation in education (Hmellou and Haroupas, 2013; Salmond and Gioka, 2013).

Moreover, the SEN SA said that IC was not stigmatising for the students but nothing else was available for students with SEN in mainstream schools. An interpretation of these words might lead to the conclusion that IC can be stigmatising but no other service is available to provide a different practice. In addition, in the absence of any other form of SEN provision, IC was possibly accepted as a 'panacea' establishment in the hope that it will lead to inclusion, reduce stigma and will close the gap between special and general education. However, it is paradoxical and antithetical to embrace inclusion by establishing a setting that is exclusive in nature. How is it possible to minimise stigma when students are pulled out of their classes and are educated in a segregating environment away from the classmates? How is it possible for the school to accept students as equal when they are treated as different? How is it possible to close the gap between special and general when a special unit is established within the mainstream and is monitored by external SEN services? Any sense of social inclusion within a context where students spent half of their school day in the IC, isolated from their classmates and without friends to play during the break-time contradicts any notion of social inclusion and pedagogy.

SEN SA's account might have provided some generic explanations and recommendations. The explanations though do not justify why teachers, after almost 25 years since IC have been introduced in schools, still claim to lack knowledge and experience. Certainly it does not immediately explain the underlining factors that have led to the practitioners in School A to locate SEN provision within the IC.

A second level of explanations will be attempted to answer the above questions. This will be attempted by revisiting the SEN laws and by placing the findings within the general socio-political context in order to demystify the underlining factors.

Those factors are considered to be multi-dimensional but also interrelated and have been understood as a '*vague inclusive educational system*' that has been identified in different contexts:

- 1) in public documents, where inclusion is documented but not practised,

2) in services, where diagnoses were carried out and statements were issued but parents and students were not further supported or guided on how to overcome barriers or to understand how to embrace the notion of SEN,

3) in schools, a. where lack of training is used to justify lack of self-assessment, b. where lack of SEN knowledge and experience is used to justify passivity, c. in the school ethos, where they referred to the need of raising SEN awareness but, teachers preferred not to discuss the 'true' nature of the IC with their students, d. where participants said that diagnosis may raise awareness, but three teachers said that some of the students with SEN were spoiled,

4) students, where school is oriented towards inclusion but, students with SEN have no friends.

This discussion will try to explore the reason that SEN provision was located in IC, IC was isolated and students were segregated in School A. These findings are considered of significant importance as they were identified from within the school, while findings like KEDDY, PI or Diagnosis emerged from participants' accounts and were external support services for the school and for the students. All findings are considered interrelated. These '*vague inclusive realities*' are divided into '*vague practices*' and '*vague inclusion*'. The first three findings will be described as '*vague practices*' as they set as a focal point the IC and the external/internal services and practices which eventually had affected the students. While the third finding sets as a focal point the students who have been immediately affected by all the above in School A and will be described as '*vague inclusion*'.

Furthermore, given the study findings and the Greek socio-political and educational context that was presented in Chapter two and will be further elaborated in this chapter, the term '*vague inclusive realities*' serves to underline the emergence of SEN inclusive educational policies in Greece. These policies seem to have been the outcome of the need to comply with external policies of inclusion in other countries rather than the need to formulate policies that emerged (as a requirement/need) from within the Greek educational system to move towards more inclusive practices. Therefore, in the light of the absence of substantial and well-defined policies for inclusion in Greece, borrowed concepts of inclusion were infused in the form of SEN legislation to balance the inequalities

of the Greek educational system which therefore lead to the emergence of '*vague inclusive realities*' within the system. Thus, the formation of the SEN inclusive policies seemed more of a political decision as opposed to a decision based on grounded empirical data, experience and a response to the communities' and schools' needs. Hence, 'vague inclusion' and 'vague practices' were the outcome of those political decisions that shaped the Greek educational system (to the formation of '*vague inclusive realities*'), given that policies were not clearly and strategically designed and lead to '*vague*' practices and understandings of inclusion. More precisely, the choice of the word '*vague*' was decided taking into consideration that SEN practices to a certain extent have been theoretically described in policies and textbooks, but the practical aspects and guidance on how these practices can be implemented while working with students in schools remained '*vague*'. An example from within School A is that the operational character of the IC was similar and followed the practices of that in GCs. As some of the adult participants have said, there are textbooks about SEN but no recommendations or practical placements have been provided to better understand how to support the students in schools; SEN support and practice is subject to teachers' individual understandings and personality. In the same sense, inclusion as a notion remained '*vague*', as the concept and expectations were not clearly defined and that was reflected in the school's practices. Emphasis was not placed on social inclusion, cooperation, involving all students in inclusion and bringing them together. Possibly the effects of the '*vague*' understandings of inclusion in School A was that IC was found to be isolated or stigmatising and inclusion the tolerance towards students with SEN, in the sense that inclusion took the form of integration or co-location, an action that did not necessarily minimise the stigma applied to the students who were attending the IC. Therefore, inclusion remained '*vague*' both as a notion and as a practice at policy making level and within School A. In the following sections the emergence of '*vague inclusive realities*' that become apparent through '*vague practices*' and '*vague inclusion*' will be further elaborated followed by suggestions to the ways that could possibly become more coherent.

Section one: Conceptualising the findings towards an understanding of ‘*Vague practices*’ in relation to the Greek Laws analysis and placing them within the current Greek socio-political context.

General socio-political context

An asymmetry that constrains the proper development of the Greek educational system can be located in the constant educational reforms. Legislative reforms have always been one of the core sociopolitical issues. In most situations, though, reforms are not well planned and are more than often superficially implemented (Zoniou et al., 2012). The confusion and frustration that those constant and inadequate changes create to both students, parents and teachers are apparent in the society and usually manifested through continuous strikes in Greek schools, with students, parents and teachers protesting for better quality in education in terms of pedagogical approaches, curriculum, infrastructure and their entitlement to free education. These expressions are indicative of the need for fundamental change in *paideia* and education.

For this reason, every political party in order to calm or satisfy the public vote, attempts minor or major reforms, which are based on electoral promises. Since those changes are usually superficial, they lead to more dissatisfaction. Therefore, educational changes do not have continuity. They are constantly being abolished, revised, reversed or withdrawn each time a government is replaced or re-elected. These reforms are usually used by governments as an excuse to avoid entering in a productive dialogue about those issues that constrain the proper development of the system. Ravanis (2009) argues that this type of decision-making in the form of bureaucratic trickery lacks prospect. The reforms substitute the real need for evaluation reports, risk analysis, as well as, constructive analysis and deep scientific research (relevant to the societal needs and priorities), that will eventually determine the character of education (theory or praxis). Decisions need to be pragmatic; when political campaigns are based on promises for which there is no appropriate funding or planning, then those

decisions in the long-term are deemed to fail. However, quality *paideia* is not only a matter for policy-makers; it has to be a matter of the whole. Otherwise, it is possible that every legislative initiative, as wise as it is planned, may not be effectively implemented. Therefore, the change should also be made at societal level. Within this context, teachers, students and their families need to readjust their attitudes towards schooling and inequalities should not be using as an excuse for not trying their best.

Another criticism of the SEN Greek policies has been that the different governments over the years have uncritically borrowed policies from other European and Western countries (Soulis, 2008; Zoniou-Sideri 2004a/2004b). One of the main reasons that lead to the borrowing of foreign policies can be located to the fact that Greece is a member of the United Nations (1945), NATO (1952), the European Union (1981) and their affiliated partners, for example, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE). Greece has been obliged to comply with the educational rules and regulations of UN, EU (and their partners) in terms of political and education agendas or follow a policy that reflects the educational tendencies proposed internationally.

The tendency regarding educational policies and practices, around the globe, has been oriented over the years and is still oriented towards inclusive practices and inclusion. One example is the 'Policy Guidelines on Inclusive Education', published by the United Nations in 2009. The guidelines have been provided to assist countries to plan and strengthen their policy and promote inclusive education. In addition, in the document it is stated that: *"An 'inclusive' education system can only be created if ordinary schools become more inclusive...an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.."* (United Nations, 2009, p.8).

More recently, in the latest international conference of the EASNIE in Brussels in November 2013, the focus was on: 'Inclusive Education in Europe – key messages: putting theory into practice' with focus on: 1) As early as possible, 2) Inclusive education benefits all, 3) Highly qualified professionals, 4) Support systems and funding mechanisms and 5) Reliable data. Relatedly, the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC) in partnership with UNESCO launched

in 2011 the campaign *“Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion”*. In 2013 the campaign continued aiming to engage more people and to support the aim where one of the suggested actions was for people to volunteer in an organisation for diversity and inclusion. The campaign is not specific to education, it refers to all aspects of society where inclusion can be applied and diversity be celebrated; still, the notion of inclusion and diversity is spread around the world. Within this context the use of the term inclusion, within the Greek policy documents over the years, even if it only represents locational arrangements, can be used as an example that showcases provision for students with SEN within the mainstream school.

The most recent campaign of the Ministry of Education, which promises that it will restore the character of education is based on the “New School” as opposed to the “School for All” (2008). More precisely, in March 2010 the former Greek Minister of Education announced a draft proposal of the new public educational policy: ‘New school, First Comes the Student’ and ‘No Child Left Behind’. SEN was incorporated in the draft proposal in the article C.6 with title: *“Advancement measures to address the inequalities and the inclusion of all. Everybody progress without any exclusion.”* The Article C.6.a is called *“Inclusion”*. The article C.6.b is named *“Special Education”*, where the new aims and action for its advancement are briefly described. Finally, the draft announces that soon the new legislative framework in SEN will be presented and it will follow the rationale of inclusion (the rationale of inclusion is not explained in the proposal). Up until today, the new Law has not been published (it has been announced for the summer 2014) and the philosophy of inclusion according to the Ministry of Education has not been fully explained or legislated. This adds to the confusion of the meaning of inclusion for the Greek education and creates the circumstances for vague and unjustified practices. According to the findings of the study, one of the drawbacks identified by the ICT was the lack of a set and planned curriculum or framework for special education which created confusion in practice. ICTs do not have a common practice and pedagogical approaches are based on individual understandings and initiatives. In addition, participants identified lack of training and knowledge of SEN as another drawback that led to inadequate practices. Similar findings were found in the study of Tsivinikou and Koustokwsta (2011).

Overall, it does raise issues and it is worrying that the Greek government has proposed a new school design and will be publishing a new SEN Law that is still based on SEN policies and models that have failed, over the last years, to flourish both in Greece and in countries where policies have been originally designed and have been borrowed from- countries with long history of SEN policies, planning and organisation. For instance, the Warnock Report in England has been a landmark and a source of reference regarding inclusion in Greece (Zoniou-Sideri, 2004), has been criticised 25 years after its implementation by Warnock herself. More specifically in 2005, she published a pamphlet where she suggested that inclusion and statement should be reconsidered. She said: "Governments must come to recognise that, even if inclusion is an ideal for society in general, it may not always be an ideal for schools...I think it has gone too far. It was a sort of bright idea of the 1970s but by now it has become a kind of mantra and it really isn't working" (The Telegraph, 2005). She continues by stating that the policy of statements where parents seek legal diagnosis for their children, with its bureaucratic character and by being unresponsive to the parents "turned out to be not a very bright idea" (The Telegraph, 2005). She also said that without proper provision and by students being taught out of their mainstream classes can lead to victimisation and bullying (The Telegraph, 2005). The insufficiencies described by Warnock have been evident or recorded by the participants in School A: 1) diagnosis being unresponsive to parents, 2) students being taught outside their classrooms links to isolation or bullying. The United States Education Act "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) in 2001, has also recently been criticised for its omissions and unrealistic goals. The former Assistant Secretary that was involved in the Act, in 2010 stated that she had changed her views about the Act 2001. More precisely, she said:

"What No Child Left Behind has given the United States is an atmosphere of punitiveness. The word accountability has come to be a synonym for punish. If students don't learn, it's the teachers' fault. Fire the teachers. Close the schools. We're now on a wrecking mission to destroy American public education" (Terrell, 2010).

Separatism and SEN laws

Based on the findings of this study, inclusion can be defined as a tutoring class offered by external affiliated agencies (ICT, KEDDY, SEN SA) that supports the academic development of students with SEN, within mainstream school, in a designated setting (the ICs). Therefore if inclusion takes the form of a tutoring class why is it viewed as a practice which is expected to close the gap between general and special education? To better understand the underlying factors that separated IC from the rest of the school and have restricted SEN provision to the IC in School A, it would be useful to have a closer look into the SEN laws. The policy documents, over the years, might have reinforced the separatism within the mainstream school by differentiating between special and general education provision.

- The Law 1143 in 1981, defines children with SEN as ‘deviant people’ and constitutes that special education will be provided to these people in public (special schools, SCs) and private schools. This Law is based on the medical model, in categorisation and normalisation, (Bayliss, 1998, Zoniou-Sideri, 2012).
- The Law 1566 in 1985, changes the terminology and ‘deviant people’ are now called people with ‘special educational needs’ and their education will be provided by public schools. The Law 1566 is a policy document for the public mainstream education at all levels and within the Law the additional arrangements for the SEN for students were incorporated; it is not a separate SEN Law. The takes a more inclusive orientation but is still based on the medical model.
- The Law 2817 in 2000, is a distinct Law for SEN education with the title: “Education of people with SEN and other stipulations”, it is not incorporated within the Law for public education. Although, it can considered more detailed than the previous laws, the fact that it has its own SEN entity can also be considered as an act towards separatism between general and special public education. The terminology has changed again and for the first time the term ‘inclusion’ is introduced within a policy document in article 11, paragraph b, which refers to the establishment of an IC within the mainstream school, what was defined in

Law 1143 as SC. The findings of Zoniou-Sideri et al., (2005), suggest that teachers could not identify significant differences between the two settings (SCs versus ICs) in terms of operation. The HT in School A also mentioned that there were no differences between the SCs and ICs. The Law 2817 reintroduces the separatism (special versus general), although the language indicates a tendency towards a more inclusive policy (IC).

- The Law 3699 in 2008, remains a distinct Law for SEN education and not part of a broader Law for public education with the title: “Special *agogi* and education of people with disabilities or with special educational needs”. There is a clear distinction between disabled people and people with SEN. Moreover, the Law is defined as ‘special *agogi* and education’, not ‘special education’. The term *agogi* can be generally translated or be understood as synonym to education. However, the term has a very distinct meaning in Greek in relation to education and to other disciplines. Briefly described, *agogi* refers to the actions taken by adults to support the development and upbringing of the youngsters at physical, mental, moral, ethical, social, aesthetical level in order to become principled citizens and integrate in the society; *agogi* refers more to the acquisition of values and principles that an individual should develop, as opposed to academic development and achievement. Although, education shares the same or similar values with *agogi* the use of the term education to describe the word can be considered generic or lacking actual meaning. Therefore, the choice of the term *agogi* should suggest that the Law 3699 aims to promote those aspects of education that go beyond the notion of academic achievements. As it was discussed before, there are more similarities with the Law 2817 than differences (medical model, categorisation and normalisation).

Within this context the discipline of special education becomes a separate part of public education with separate goals and vision. How is it possible for general educators not to view the IC as a separate department of the school, when the legislation creates binaries and when the control for its operation lays with the SEN public services? How is it possible for GCTs and the HT in School A to perceive ICs as incorporated part of the mainstream education and claim authority and additional duties regarding SEN when these fall outside their

everyday duties? Of course, the above understandings are not provided as a justification for omissions or to transfer teachers' responsibilities. An important part of teachers' responsibilities should be their students' wellbeing which involves all the activities, including the time spent in IC.

This separatism (general versus special) might also be the factor that general teachers perceive inclusion as primarily a practice that is aiming to be for students with SEN and be practiced by SEN teachers. Although the findings of the study suggest that some of the participants viewed inclusion as a whole school practice (with distinct character: academic inclusion versus social inclusion) and one teacher gave examples of social inclusive practice. Still few signs of inclusive practice (either social or academic) within the GC or during the breaks was identified. On the contrary, separation and isolation were identified as aspects of the operation of the IC within the school and students with SEN. Nonetheless, it is important to understand that when the state creates separatism and opposite binaries, then most possibly the practitioners will follow that path. It is very important to understand the context within which special education was developed and has been implemented within the mainstream in order to better understand certain outcomes.

One factor that may have contributed to the separatism between the two establishments (special/general) and reinforced the passive behaviour of general educators and practitioners towards ICs and inclusion, might have been, that the term inclusion as an educational term has been introduced in Greek mainstream schools as an aspect of the special education; that is primarily practiced by the SEN staff rather than the GCTs. A careful look within the current SEN Law 3699 indicates that the term 'inclusion' only appears within the policy document: 1) as a mention to social and professional inclusion that will be the outcome of educating students with SEN within the mainstream, as well as, in relation to the students' progress and development that will lead to inclusion within the mainstream and 2) with regards to locational arrangements (the ICs). The Law does not stipulate that the Greek educational system constitutes inclusion as a philosophy and practice that defines its schools ethos regarding SEN. Certainly the Law does not define inclusion as a notion or a practice. It states, that it will provide 'special *agogi* and education' to students with SEN and disabled students in different school settings.

It becomes apparent that the Law's emphasis is on 'Special *agogi* and education' and not on inclusion. The mention to inclusion is to define the locational arrangement (IC) or to emphasise that students with SEN should be equally accepted. A sense of otherness is attached to students with SEN that separates them from the norm (Foucault, 2000). However, due to the significance of the word 'inclusion', in the history of SEN, the locational arrangements became synonymous to philosophy and practice and were expected to develop the character that the word 'inclusion' suggested. It seems that inclusion has been adopted in the Greek educational vocabulary as a term with 'assumed', ontology and expectations. Maybe this was the outcome of the need of the Greek society to find a common ground for practice where students with SEN are included within the mainstream or that their learning difficulties are understood as SEN rather than be attributed to laziness or lack of ability. Within this context the term inclusion has also been adopted as an umbrella term that assumes that students will not be stigmatised or marginalised and their rights will be both respected and safeguarded within the mainstream school. Therefore, the use of the word inclusion gave the opportunity to scholars, unions, families and professionals to advocate for more, although the 'Special *agogi* and education' or inclusion is mainly located within the IC (Zoniou-Sideri, 2004; Tsivinikou and Koustokwsta 2011).

Another reason that the notions of inclusion and provision were mainly understood in terms of disability, can be evident in the relative Law that subscribes additional provision based on categories of disability and also specifies that ethnic minority students are not SEN (Zoniou-Sideri, 2012). Inclusion should go beyond disability and notions of defectology. If inclusion is related to students' personal social and academic development based on their needs, notions of acceptance, wellbeing, belonging and engagement in the school process and social life in order to fulfil their dreams and desires. Perceiving students with disabilities and learning difficulties as a "distinct" group whose participation in mainstream school and access in SEN provision is determined by categories and level of disability, is not relevant to the notion of inclusion and equal rights. If the aim is to move away from a dual educational system, then the focus should shift to the needs of all students. A child who is experiencing frustration and distress due to the upcoming school exams requires

the equal support and embracement as a child who holds a statement. One of the main purposes that statements serve is the legal acknowledgment and justification of a child's needs and the necessity of SEN provision or one-to-one support. If, however, "specialized" support becomes a legal requirement for all students and not mainly for those being identified as "in need", the attitudes towards 'special' may be reformed into 'general' with levels of support that focus on individuality and all students. Then "disability" may not be the main concern that creates barriers to inclusion and change will refer and be achieved for the whole and not for its parts. Within the current educational system the focus is on what the child is lacking and how the problem can be remediated.

It can be said that for the time that the students with SEN are attending ICs or they are identified as SEN they are not accepted for who they are, an 'otherness' is attached to their being. Their needs are understood as being different: deviating from the 'norm', which is defined by employing categorical structures (Popkewitz, 2001). IEPs have been proposed and the GPI has developed PAPEA that signifies the areas of need that the SEN teachers should focus on to support students and eventually enable them to participate full-time in the GC (normalisation). Within this context, SEN provision takes the form of 'normalisation', where the final aim of the state is full-inclusion in the school environment (GGG 449, 2007). Therefore, it seems that normality is related to the students' full-time participation in GC and inclusion seems to be mainly situated or being relevant to special education and seems to be 'achieved' when the 'problem' is 'cured'. However it is questionable whether full-time participation in the GC will lead to acceptance and inclusion, as the 'otherness' that is attached to previously labelled IC students cannot instantly transform the perceptions by merely participating full-time in GC. In addition, this type of approach assumes that SEN is 'curable' and complies with the medical models that place emphasis on pathology and remediation of 'problems', that ignore individual needs, social aspects of being and the barriers that policies impose on the students' learning and rights (Barton, 2009; Thomas 2004; Carrington, 1999; Bayliss, 1998; Ballard, 1997).

According to Norwich (2002), there are three levels of needs: those that are shared by all, those that are shared by some and those that are unique to each individual. This concept is almost evident in every social structure and every

human interaction. Specific needs and expectations differ from one person to another and all students have specific needs, not only those identified as SEN. This will lead to an educational system that may not be special for some but for all and at the same time have the capacity and expertise to work with specific issues that exist in every individual when is needed. Therefore, schools can construct and reconstruct the educational system and provide support services that aim to support all students and not only those identified as having SEN.

Paradoxes within the system: *Frodistiria*

“We have an educational system that is difficult to describe a system that needs to be changed. It is based on public educational provision. Parallel to this is another system supposedly grown to cover the inadequacies of the former sector” (Greek Minister of Education (2002), in Zambeta, 2002, p.641).

One of the main advantages of the Greek educational system is that education should be free and public. The Constitution of 1975 states the right to free and public education and continues by recognising that “The state shall support distinguishing students and those deserving of assistance or special care, according to their abilities” (1975 Constitution, as cited in Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideri, 2000, p.29). Based on this axiom and over the years, the governments have been proclaiming free and public education for all. In reality, though, students’ academic achievements are acquired outside the public school, in parallel private educational institutes where education is neither free nor public (Zambeta, 2002). Within this context, it could be said that one of the main paradoxes of the Greek educational system is the legislation of the unwritten Law of PI (*frodistiria*/centres). Students have been attending private centres to receive support in core subjects and to develop their academic skills and emotional wellbeing because these services were not offered or were insufficient within the public school or services. Another reason might be that the Greek mentality have been tailored to believe that public schools and teachers are unable to provide quality education within the school due to its disorganised and unorganised character. This condition has been witnessed over many decades now and the introduction of special education within the mainstream has produced another market place that has been rapidly grown over the last 15 years: SEN private centres. It was also identified in the particular study that the majority of the

students in School A were attending *frodistiria* and all students from IC were attending PIs, including either *frodistiria* or centres or both. Therefore, the question is whether the constitution of special education within the general education has provided more opportunities for education of all children within the public school units? Or whether it has provided more opportunities to the private sector to profit and expand? However, the question is why the governments continue the dialogue around education by emphasising and preserving its public and free nature?

According to a survey contacted by the Research Institute of the University of Macedonia in 2012, in a sample of 1044 students and parents, the results shown that the household expenditure costs for families for *frodistiria* in core subjects was rated between €2200 to €4000 per month and for private tuition for foreign languages the costs were recorded as rating from €2200 to €700. In the same survey, 68% of participants said that the *frodistiria* are synonymous to success in the national exams, 17% said that the reason that they choose *frodistiria* is the need for additional support in core subjects and 13% said that schooling in *frodistiria* provides genuine knowledge. According to the Greek General Confederation of Labour in the area of Education and Lifelong learning (KANEP) survey published in 2012, the household expenditure for private tuition was estimated at €952.6 million per year. Based on these numbers the stakeholders cannot insist on proclaiming free education.

Moreover, the phenomenon of private tutoring, *frodistiria*, is described in Greek as *parapaideia* and ‘parasite’ that distorts the principles and the values of the Greek pedagogical system. The term *parapaideia*, has been employed to describe all the forms of schooling that operate outside the public school and etymologically it can be described as violation of education or unrecognised education. An international term for the phenomenon of *parapaideia* according to Bray (2011), is ‘shadow education’. According to the report by Bray (2011), the phenomenon has been observed in other European countries but the overall rates place Greece and Cyprus in the higher rank for ‘shadow education’. In the report *parapaideia* is described as the ‘guilty secret’ of the Greek education and Bray (2011) questions why the phenomenon has not given priority at research level given its long history and implications at both educational, political and economic levels. I would argue that *parapaideia* is not a ‘guilty secret’ in Greece,

but is a commonly accepted form of education that has been constituted by the society over the years, even if it lacks official presidential signature. Therefore, instead of 'shadowing' the existence of private institutes in Greece, the stakeholders need to take a closer look into the factors that created the phenomenon. Not necessarily from a radical point of view that might advocate for abolition (as this is plausible), but consider the factors that have led to their existence and also consider how the public sector can possibly benefit or learn from the phenomenon of *parapaideia* (Bray, 2011).

Finally, the impact of *frodistiria* on the operation of the public schools is inevitable, but their impact on the character of the school is catalytic. Students see the school as a place that does not provide much prospect for academic or personal development. Students lose their faith in the school's potential and teachers' abilities. In this context, students put the least effort into being attentive and active during class-time, since all they need to know is already provided in *frodistiria*. Educators become passive transmitters of information without making efforts to capture pupils' attention or promote their active engagement in the class. Therefore, in most situations, the dominant pedagogical approach in teaching is the lesson delivery by the use of a textbook (Padeliadou, 2005). The GCT is in charge of the lesson and learning follows a common structure for most educators in most schools. According to Padeliadou (2005), the majority of GCTs (73%) in primary and secondary education prefer the use of traditional teaching approaches; deliver the lesson during the whole didactic hour without any interactive methods. This approach have also been observed in the IC in School A. In this context, students have to confront an educational system where engagement and participation in the classroom is controversial and to a certain degree impossible (Vlachou, 2006). The illegitimate mechanism of private institutions does compromise the school operation. In any case, the existence of *frodistiria* shows the failure of the Greek educational system to provide and promote an effective pedagogical framework in which quality practices and students' rights will be actualised.

Restraints within the system

Monitoring of ICs

The study's findings suggested that inclusive practice was located in an isolated environment (IC) that seemed to be stigmatising. Within this context the HT was unaware about the actual practice of IC, didactic methods, educational material and pedagogical practices that were employed by the ICT. More precisely the HT in his interview said that:

“If you ask me more things about what is happening inside the IC I cannot tell you as I do not know because I cannot interfere with the work of the ICT.”

In the GGG (2007, paragraph 9), it is stated that the HTs in the schools should a) monitor and provide resources to ensure the operational function and needs of the IC and b) provide constant provision to ensure IC's operative and functional character; HTs should not interfere with the work of ICT on other matters or take decisions to terminate the operation of ICs without the approval of the SEN SA.

The HT of School A, did not base his answer on the stipulations of the Law but, on the fact that he lacked the knowledge that would provide him the expertise to make suggestions and monitor the IC's operation. In addition, many HTs (including the HT of School A) had acquired their posts before the introduction of special education in mainstream schools. At that time, statements and additional SEN support services were not part of their knowledge and expertise. This raises questions about the type of knowledge and qualifications that the HTs should hold in order to perform their duties effectively; within an educational environment that is constantly changing and the schools are expected to implement new pedagogical programmes and SEN practices. Therefore, it might be more effective to refine the existing policy and allow the HTs to have a more concrete and active role over the operation of the ICs. It is important for the Ministry to provide training to ensure that the HTs have the qualifications that will allow them to positively contribute to the on-going developments regarding SEN and perform their duties effectively.

According to the Law, the SEN SA and the local KEDDY should monitor ICs operation. However, as it was apparent from the findings of the study, both agencies were so overly busy that monitoring the SEN school units became

impossible. Therefore, in the absence of any type of assessment or monitoring the ICT becomes an 'authority' (Efstathiou and Ratsiakos, 2013). Vlachou (2006) argues that "the state holds a very limited role over...classroom organisation, teachers' accountability, pupil testing and assessment of school quality" (p.42). Nevertheless, who is accountable for certifying the effective implementation of the educational programmes, and identifying and reacting to the possible omissions and deficiencies that emerge on a daily basis within the school? Therefore, a potential drawback that arises from limiting the role of HTs regarding ICs operation is that the Law constitutes the right to the ICTs to have almost full freedom over the ICs. Lack of formal assessment can be very problematic at many levels.

For example, assessment takes the form of self-assessment. It is certainly worrying to establish an educational system, where educators are not actually accountable for their performance and the main tactic of evaluation is based on self-judgment (Papaioannou, 2009). It is unclear whether this type of judgment is based on the principles of reflective practice; which enhances professional development (Harford and MacRuaic, 2008). In School A, possibly due to lack of monitoring, the cooperation with other staff or parents was subject to the ICT's personality and perceptions, it limited the resources used in the IC, it limited the training opportunities (both for the ICT and the GCTs), it limited the exchange of views and ideas on educational matters (both for the ICT and the GCT). Finally, due to the above the isolating, segregating or stigmatising practices within School A were possibly reinforced. It is important to produce a mechanism that will evaluate and monitor the progress and effectiveness of the educational practices that will be based on both external/internal services and self-assessment practices (Meletopoulos, 2009). A mechanism, though, that will not be driven by authoritative approaches, but one that will act as guidance for teachers or take the form of a "critical friend" whose feedback can help teachers reflect on their practice and advance or develop their pedagogical approaches and assist their practice.

Lack of SEN training and knowledge

As it was mentioned before, findings indicated that lack of training, knowledge /expertise possibly limited cooperation between the staff and minimised their

involvement in the IC and SEN practices. The views expressed by the general staff were that they did not have the knowledge and expertise around SEN matters to contribute to students' progress effectively. A factor that might have been used as a justification for not being involved with the IC or SEN in their GCs. One of the GCTs mentioned that she was a new teacher and did not have the expertise to take initiatives related to SEN. Therefore, responsibility was diverted to the person who had the expertise around SEN matters: the ICT. Moreover, the GCTs were not well aware about the SEN of their students. That was justified on the basis that the diagnoses were very generic and it did not provide valuable knowledge to the GCTs in order to support their students in the GC. The same views were also expressed by the HT regarding the context of the diagnosis. Although, the ICT did not express any views about the context of the diagnosis, the study of Tsivinikou and Koutsokosta (2011), showed that only 5% of the ICTs took into consideration the diagnosis when planning their teaching. The same research also suggests that inclusion was not yet achieved in the sense of acceptance of students with SEN in the mainstream school.

A study about the views of Greek and Cypriot mainstream primary teachers on inclusion has shown that Greek teachers had less expertise around SEN matters compared to the Cypriot teachers. As a result, Cypriot teachers were more positive or had more positive attitudes towards teaching students with SEN. In addition, when teachers were asked about which categories of students they were willing to teach in their classes, the majority of the teachers did not reply. Those who replied stated that they were only willing to teach students with learning difficulties or students with minor mental disabilities. The researchers attributed these answers or lack of answers to the fact that the GCTs had limited knowledge about SEN (Batsiou et al., 2006). According to the research findings of Hmellou and Haroupas (2013), the reasons that the Greek GCTs have negative perceptions about ICs and inclusion was because 1) they believed that students with SEN disturbed the delivery of their lessons in the GC and 2) students with SEN did not benefit from their participation in the GC. Two of the GCTs in School A expressed the same views.

As it was presented before, the Law 3699 devotes a paragraph about training but this is only with reference to the SEN teachers who are employed in special schools or in ICs (paragraph 25). There is no specific mention to the HTs or GCTs'

training. It is also stipulated that training should be provided from the local county and the KEDDY. Therefore, the question is why training is not provided by the county? Maybe the reason is the same as with the case of the SEN SA's and KEDDY's where training was not offered due to lack of personnel. Therefore, it seems that it is difficult to name one single person or a service as accountable for any insufficiency, as it seems that the responsibility is diverted from one person to the other or from service to the other. This seems to be a vicious circle, where everyone is accountable but responsibility cannot be claimed by any service as everything is interrelated and at the same time insufficient.

Moreover, cooperation might not have been attempted on the same basis that was described before: GCTs lack knowledge, restricted them from offering their input. As it was stated by one of the GCTs, the fact that the two settings operated as separate units with different roles and responsibilities, made it natural for the teachers not to cooperate as they shared different practices (another possible separatism, special versus general). Possibly, lack of cooperation between staff forced the SEN provision, in School A, to be placed within the closed doors of IC and only provided by the ICT.

In the Law 3699, there is mention of cooperation between all parties but the necessity of cooperation or liaison is not specified or explained. However, it gives the right to GCTs to refer students for diagnosis to KEDDY. Although, Law 3699 does not refer specifically to cooperation with set plans and vision, it does refer to the duties of KEDDY. One of which is the planning of IEPs, where its implementation and final draft lays with the ICT in cooperation with the GCT and the SEN SA (Law 3699, paragraph 6, stipulation 5). In the IEP planning parents can also participate, after invitation by the KEDDY. There is no mention about the students' role in their IEPs and parents' role in the process is marginalised. This single paragraph raises many issues about the rights and voice of students in their own education, as well as, the roles and rights of their families. It is questionable whether an IEP can effectively be planned and respond to the needs of the students when their views are not included. In addition, an IEP cannot be considered as part of an inclusive practice when the policy is exclusive: the students do not participate in the process and their views are not included or valued. Moreover, with regards to School A, how is it possible for an IEP to be constructed and implemented with the cooperation of the GCT and the SEN SA,

when there is no cooperation between the parties? If the GCTs state that they do not have the expertise and knowledge on SEN matters then how can they contribute in the formation of an IEP that is related to SEN issues? How can the SEN SA have a holistic understanding and an effective contribution to the planning of IEPs when he did not know the students? The list of questions can be long and exhausting. However, it is important to indicate that any of the stipulations of the SEN Law cannot be effective, if cooperation is absent and the voice of students is not heard. Within this context, it is questionable whether the IEPs were effectively planned in School A.

The findings of a qualitative study (Giannoulis and Peteinaraki, 2013) which explored the views of SEN teachers working in mainstream Greek schools as *parallel teachers* suggested that their presence in the GC was not embraced by the GCTs, which limited the cooperation between the GCT and the SEN teacher. It is interesting but rather worrying the fact that even when the teachers were working in the same class, the separation between special and general was evident. At the same time, it was encouraging that the same study reported that during the course of time and after the duties and responsibilities of each teacher were well defined, the relationships were improved. The GCTs become more interested in learning more about SEN and supporting the SEN teacher (Giannoulis and Peteinaraki, 2013). Therefore, it is possible that if communication is actually encouraged, GCT can become more active participants in the development and actualisation of the SEN programmes and cooperation can be constructed. However, based on the findings of this study, the ICT was not very oriented towards cooperation, given that most of his time was spent in the IC – even during the break-time-. Cooperation should be a responsibility of both the ICT and the GCT and given that the ICT is expected to promote inclusive ideals within the mainstream school then maybe a more active role within School A would have produced more positive outcomes.

The view that teachers' role is invaluable for the effective accomplishment of any educational change (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002), is unquestionable. In Greece, in order to enrich and boost teachers' practice, additional aids are necessary like training, funding, the introduction of supportive specialised staff, proper infrastructure, establishment of ICT environment in the classes and so forth. However, if the aim is to find the path to enhance and support teachers'

efforts, promote cooperation, inclusion and re-establish teacher-student relationship, as well as, re-engage students into critical, analytic and joyful learning; then, in doing that, linear solutions will not be the main way forward. It seems that additional training, proper infrastructure, technology and resources are not the “philosophical stone” that will magically or instantly provide the solution to the deeply entrenched problems. This does not mean that proper planning and implementation of the aforementioned requirements are not anticipated or that they will not have positive long-term effects. Nonetheless, in order to establish the proper functioning of the Greek educational system a series of radical actions would probably need to be taken. To certify a more axiocratic and pragmatic culture in Greek schools as a whole that would therefore be reflected in schools as part of this whole. One of these actions would probably be the de-centralisation of power from the Ministry to schools and educators. This may be a necessity that may allow teachers to be more flexible and provide them with the opportunity to engage actively in curriculum planning in order to take actual initiatives and responsibility and not merely follow guidelines (Gravani and John, 2005).

Students’ role in their education

In order to produce and achieve change, it is important to approach it cautiously, with careful analysis of the major issues. In Greece one of the issues that has not been given much attention is students’ views on inclusion. Students are the main receivers of educational policies and inclusive or exclusive practices (Messiou, 2002). In this view, their voices and insights regarding these reforms and their impact are essential in decision-making and potential policy formation (Vlachou, 2006; Lowe and MacDonelly, 2007), since the students are those who experience the inclusive practices. According to Norwich and Kelly (2004), “while inclusive educational policies continue to generate intense debate, there is comparatively little systematic research on its many facets. One important facet on the inclusion question is children’s own perspectives on their special educational provision” (p.43).

Students' understanding about inclusion are equally important when promoting change and producing effective practices. According, to the UN (1989, article 12), "parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child" and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, states that "children who can form views...should be actively involved in the assessments, decision-making, meetings, case reviews and conferences" (in Woolfson et al., 2007, p.40-41). Both statements do raise concerns in relation to the barriers that they set for a specific group of children (that as stated cannot form opinions). The argument, though, is that students' voices should be acknowledged and inform decision-making, a position that is not yet clearly stated in the Greek legislation and it is not fully appreciated by the school staff. As Vlachou (2006) argues, based on her research findings, students in ICs have the capacity to "reflect on their experiences and views on a variety of issues that can be used for further development and change" (p.215). Students in School A were able to form opinions, to express their views and state their preferences and likes about their education and their life in School A. In addition the HT did mention that there is no time devoted to discussing with students in the school, given the busy school curriculum, but he emphasised that students have opinions and questions that should be heard and taken into consideration.

Understanding what changes mean for the students and directing the change based on students assumptions and needs will be a very effective step towards inclusion. In this context, inclusion will arrive through a more productive and meaningful process based on students' actual needs, views and suggestions. In doing that, one has to accept that any move to another direction will at a certain level create tension (Norwich, 2002). What is important, in this context, though, is that change will emerge and be the outcome of a collective and concurrently child-centred procedure; rather than predominantly be a battle between parents and teachers or policy-makers and practitioners.

At the same time the use of supportive systems to facilitate students' learning at all levels is essential. The involvement of various disciplines in this process is vital, to set the theoretical framework and support the change. Support services that include a diversity of disciplines will act as a facilitator that takes into consideration various aspects that may emerge from different approaches. Using

a multidiscipline support system reflects the multiculturalism that exists in schools.

Finally, acknowledging the impact that changes have on students' learning, experience and social development, embracing and revealing students' views and voices, in a context where changes are attempted but not actualised, will provide quality reforms and develop students' wellbeing, their rights in education and will value and identify the significance of their role in the process. At the same time, this understanding is not aiming to undermine the contribution, experience and role of teachers, parents and professionals. On the contrary, their contribution and experience is highly valued but placed within a framework where "authenticity" will not be the main mean to development, but rather, will be collaboration, cooperation, dialogue between all agents involved in education with the understanding that changes are made for students, therefore, those will be the ones that should be principally consulted. In this context, changes will not be decided and performed based on what professionals believe is "best for the child" but will emerge based on what students also believe "is best for them".

How general education affects special education

Finally, if the main scope of educational policy has been to change the dual-track educational system by including students with SEN in mainstream (Norwich and Kelly, 2004). Certainly, the circumstance under which inclusion was introduced, created initially confusion and worry in the Greek educational community. However, the discussion about the omissions of the inequalities in the Special education and planning have been long and unfruitful. Moreover, inclusion and the dialogue about omissions has been placed within a context that aimed to close the gap between special and general and tackle the gap between theory and practice. Aiming to refine Special Education, which has already proven to be a challenging task by implementing changes within an educational context that is underperforming is problematic in nature. How can an educational endeavour become fruitful in an environment that is deprived or unsuccessful? Inclusive practice has been implemented in an already dysfunctional educational system where necessary infrastructure and funding were lacking. In this climate, teachers

were assigned with additional duties and responsibilities without proper training and the educational services were operating without resources and specialised personnel.

Before forcing the merging of two different educational settings or disciplines (special and general education) into one single unit, one needs to recuperate the distinct character of each discipline, refine and define goals, objectives and visions and then move into any endeavour that will bridge the gap between the two. The next step will be bridging the gap and not instantly merging the general and the special education. In the case that is proven that merging the two disciplines as a step forward, then steps should be small with set planning and clear vision that do take into consideration the improvement of education and students' wellbeing within a pragmatic context. This will prevent or reduce the debate around discourses of catastrophe in education and will remove the focus from binary oppositions like special versus general, general teachers versus special teachers, mainstream students versus students with SEN, theory versus practice, curriculum versus pedagogy (Ried, 2013).

Therefore the source of the 'problems' identified in the operation of inclusive practice within the mainstream school is not only due to the lack of infrastructure, the insufficient knowledge of the teachers about SEN and the lack of cooperation, well-defined and conceptualised notions or the fact that Greece have uncritically borrowed educational practices and policies from other countries. These are all primary matters within special education but of secondary dimension when they are applied within the general education, in the sense that the source of the problems may lay on the fact that the general education is already deficient. Building a house on top of a building that is lacking strong foundations is not a recipe for success. As a result, any attempt to implement additional educational programmes (SEN) by creating new policies and without rebuilding the foundations of the general education remains a 'bureaucratic trip', as it was described by Zoniou-Sideri (2004).

Returning to the concept of *paideia*, it can be argued that a *paideia* that aims to empower students to enable them to develop ownership and become free citizens with critical thinking, needs an educational structure and curriculum that is not solely steered by the government and is not common to all, but is relevant to the

communities and county cities. In ancient Greece, *paideia* differed from city to city based on specific strengths or needs. In the Athenian *polis*, *paideia* focused on the development of citizenship and democracy, while in other *polis* the focus was on physical development. Nowadays, in Greece, counties still differ in strengths or needs such as, for example, arts, SEN external services and internal resources, or even agriculture and tourism. These assets or needs can be identified and used to design an educational system that is also based on these idiosyncratic strengths or needs with less state control and more 'power' given to the communities to tailor their curriculum and education to support or embrace those needs and strengths.

There seems to be a need for a system that is not solely measured against quantitative performances but to be also qualitative, holistic and diverse. At a theoretical level, the underlying and fundamental ideas that govern the Greek contemporary *paideia* need to be conceptualised and communicated. It is especially important for the state and the community to decide what type of *paideia* they wish for their future citizens and then identify how *paideia* could be reflected through *ekpaideusi* and practice. The laws and legislations, as it was discussed throughout this thesis, should be realistic, well-defined and then explain and reflect ontological and epistemological issues embedded within the system like *paideia*, *ekpaideusi*, democracy, pedagogy in order to discover inclusion.

If *paideia* moves away from governmental control and presuppositions towards achievements and become more current by focusing on young peoples' interests, arts and creativity, then *paideia* can be reconstructed and reflect current tendencies. Within this educational structure, educators can possibly focus more on other aspects of human aptitudes and learning.

At the same time, Nilholm (2006), denotes that it is important for the research community and the students to have an active role in public discussions about inclusion and in decision and policy-making. Universities and research centres in other countries have carried out studies to explore, for example, how to minimise crime by young people. Some of the outcomes of these studies have been the development of intervention programmes, the establishment of youth centres and activity parks tailored to young peoples' interests in supporting their needs

(Jamieson and Ross, 2007; Carmichael, 2008; Cox, 2012). Similarly, in Greece, universities and researchers can be employed to carry out studies to better understand the aspects that may be barriers to the implementation of inclusion. If, for example, the state control, the rigorous curriculum, teachers' lack of SEN notions and practices are some of the obstacles, then academic research can identify those aspects, suggest ways forward that embrace the concept of *paideia* within the current Greek context and be relevant to communities. A more diverse educational system that emerges from research and young peoples' interests can also respond to current needs for inclusion, ownership, diversity, SEN provision, multiculturalism, new technologies and embrace students' voice. However, research itself cannot be conclusive or fundamental, an element of collective, collaborative practice within a multi-agency approach needs to be employed.

In relation to the above and in order to achieve change and tackle a multi-faced deficient situation, all layers of the 'problem' need to be addressed and acknowledged. The ways to move forward need to be clear, rigorous, consistent but, also applied at multiple levels in order to tackle all aspects that require attention. This study and its findings suggest that certain steps in specific areas need to be considered and an internal sense of ownership of students and practitioners over their learning, development and schooling is required. In doing that, the centralised educational system where all power is concentrated in the state should be re-examined. Opportunities for development, initiatives and action need to be offered to schools and local authorities. Local authorities and schools can best identify the needs, strengths and weaknesses in their communities and therefore, organise and tailor practices based on those fundamental understandings. Once concepts and ideals become more explicit and schools have the ability to develop and employ their own pedagogies, curriculum, teaching approaches where students are engaged in the process of change and learning, then aims and expectations can be pragmatic, more achievable and hopefully the outcome of their own understandings. Within this framework, SEN education and ICs can have a more coherent character where practices can be expressed through actions that aim to bring students together than employing approaches that may lead to exclusion or isolation. Cooperation and inclusion among practitioners, students and parents can only be the outcome of a collective endeavour rather than a forced state decision or borrowed policy.

In doing this, it is important to identify and attempt to minimise evident corruptions within the Greek educational system like for example, the emergence of phenomena like *parapaideia* and *frodistiria*. In order for students to flourish and progress in schools, they need to trust the system and not rely on external pedagogical setting for their education and development of their skills. This is a long term goal but, significant in developing an inclusive educational character and ethos in the Greek schools, its *paideia* and therefore, the students' wellbeing and their development.

Section two: Conceptualising the findings towards an understanding of '*Vague inclusion*'.

'Vague inclusion'

'*Vague inclusion*', as a term, sets as focal point the student and has been employed to refer to the students' with SEN within the mainstream in terms of acceptance and wellbeing. In order to better describe the understandings of '*vague inclusion*', findings and quotes from the interviews have been used to express the rationale that led to this understanding.

'*Vague inclusion*' can be used as an umbrella term that refers to many different levels of inclusion, within School A, where patterns of behaviour may lead to the formation of isolation, having less friends at school, bullying, stigma, otherness and differentiation.

The term 'differentiation' or 'differentiated' for the purpose of this thesis will be used as a term that refers to how pupils perceived or behaved towards students classified as having SEN. This term explains that SEN classified pupils within the mainstream were viewed as different; a sense of otherness was applied to them. They were not part of the group and they were differentiated in terms of the behaviour from their classmates towards them, and possibly adults within the mainstream. Adults or students appeared to be inclusive but their actions might have been exclusive. As the HT said:

“Children have begun to accept students with SEN, but again is ‘superficial’, I believe that at any time when they are by their own, they will say something that will differentiate the child from them.”

According to the findings of this study, pupils were seen as different and were treated as different during the first years of schooling. This became apparent not immediately from students accounts (who did express that they do not have friends or that other student do not play with them) but mainly from adults (teachers/parents) and observations. Adults said that when the students with SEN, in School A, were initially enrolled they were not accepted by their classmates which was expressed through certain acts of bullying, or by the fact that students with SEN were not included in games.

Throughout schooling, according to the adult participants, while mainstream pupils came to know that ‘others’ can be ‘different’ or behave differently, students with SEN become more accepted, but not necessarily included. This understanding, may have been apparent and expressed through ‘masked rejection’, where bullying might have been reduced and probably the students with SEN might have had more support from their classmates or their classmates might be more understanding or tolerant.

More precisely, parents A and C during the interviews said that their children were being bullied during the first one or two years of schooling but after the mainstream students got to know them, bullying was not evident or minimised and in some cases their children had received support from their mainstream classmates. Though observations, it was evident that all students who took part in the study had no friends or they had fewer friends within the mainstream, compared to their GC classmates. Getting used to an idea, behaviour or a person is arguably not synonymous to acceptance or inclusion. However, differentiated behaviour towards students with SEN in the form of bullying to some extent was no longer as evident. Possibly, mainstream pupils came to understand that different pupils had different sets of needs or displayed different patterns of behaviours that might require a different approach. However, stigma, possibly, still applied to the group of pupils that had initially been differentiated. That was understood on the basis that mainstream pupils did no longer ‘pick on’ their classmates because, they possibly understood that they should not be displaying negative behaviours towards them but, at the same time, they did possibly

consider them as 'different' or 'less able' as they did not immediately involve them in their games. Or in some cases they might have not be given equal opportunities in the GC to participate in the lesson or maybe in class group activities. GCT A said:

"The student I have in my class, his classmates know him since Year 1 and have embraced him...But, I can see, they do not play with him, they do accept him but it is not the same, they will not ask him naturally as with other students to play football...Children are cruel."

The other two GCTs made similar comments. They said that they had noticed that during play-time the students were not included in games or class activities. The PE teacher also mentioned that during PE, the students attending the IC were always less included or they were the last ones to be chosen by their classmates when they were given the option to form teams. The PE teacher also mentioned that her intention was to always include all students in the sports activities so no one will be left out. All the parents referred to their children's friendship either by raising concerns about safety or by stating their concerns about their children's friendships. The ICT was also mentioned once that he worried about the students in IC and their friendships. The HT (as it was previously mentioned) said that children can be cruel but based on his experience with time children get to accept others, but this understanding did not indicate full-inclusive behaviour. However, the fact that School A had chosen not to discuss openly the nature of the IC with all students is considered antithetical. When participants were asked why they chose not to use the term IC, the answers varied. Some of them said because this is what everyone did (they did not have thought about it) and others said it was better because children are cruel. In interviews with student-participants lack of friends was mentioned and during observations it was evident that students with SEN were either segregated or alone (even student-participants did not play with each other during break-time, possibly because they were in different year groups). Taking into consideration these understandings, it seems that both inclusion and acceptance become vague. Inclusion, in terms of friendships, in School A seems to have been expressed through notions of 'acceptance' that could also be understood possibly as tolerance.

Moreover, based on observations and participants' accounts it came into attention that there was a lack of monitoring during break-times. While carrying

out observations I had the opportunity to speak with some general teachers on duty. When one of the teachers was asked why Student C was always with the teachers on duty, the answer was:

“It is sad that he is isolated, he does not have friends, he is always with us but we cannot force the students to play with him.”

Another teacher mentioned about Student B:

“Most of the times he annoys students and he spoils their games, this is why they do not play with him.”

GCT C made a similar comment about Student C. Student C’s mother mentioned that sometimes Student C did not know how to interact with other children, he wanted to play with them but he ended up spoiling their game. And then she raised the issue that teachers do not promote socialisation and she wished that the ICT would have supported more Student C on that matter.

It was surprising and worrying that adults seemed to be concerned or expressed their sadness but they did not make any recommendations of how they would overcome this obstacle and ensure that all students would have had friends or at least they would have been included in games. The general understanding from conversations and observations was that ‘it is what it is’, some students are ‘different’ and cannot make friendships or their behaviour prevents them from having friends. This raises the question of how inclusion was understood by teachers and their role and responsibilities 1) in ensuring that inclusion was positively implemented, 2) that students’ wellbeing in school was safeguarded and 3) pupils’ learning was extended to the understanding of how social interaction should be displayed within the school (teach students social skills). Possibly a more holistic approach and understandings regarding special education directed to all teachers and students, might have led to a more inclusive environment in School A and cases of ‘vague inclusion’ might have been minimised.

Another aspect of ‘vague inclusion’ was that participants mentioned that students with SEN were viewed as a ‘problem’ –that needed to be removed from the GC to IC. The ICT said that on different occasions the GCTs made comments like: *“Take him, I cannot stand him anymore”*. Based on the above and taking into account the HT’s opinions who mentioned that students in the absence of

teachers might 'differentiate' students with SEN. Then, it is possible that in the absence of the researcher and when teachers felt free to express themselves the terminology might have 'differentiated' students with SEN.

It seemed that the school culture based on the findings of the study, might have progressed from 'differentiated behaviour' to 'masked rejection', in the sense that there was SEN provision within the school but, then again only located within the IC and not in the GC –also IC's operation was formally introduced. It seemed that full-inclusion was not yet implemented given that the SEN unit within School A remained isolated or was separated from the mainstream school. Possibly, 1) more knowledge, 2) practical training, 3) understanding of holistic practices about SEN and inclusion, 4) raising SEN awareness and 5) the development of an inclusive ethos would have contributed more in the development of a more collaborative and inclusive school.

The literature review suggests, that the laws were formed within a context that did not take into account the socio-cultural understandings but, was based on external approaches and created confusion among scholars and practitioners. Nonetheless, the school ethos should be inclusive in principle, regardless whether it is called 'inclusion' or whether teachers are fully aware of the philosophy that underpins 'inclusion'. The general feeling from my engagement with School A was that GCTs seemed to have had 'forgotten' that the students who attended the IC were initially their students and responsibility, a more active role should have been evident. It seemed that all responsibility for the education and the wellbeing of the students was diverted to the IC and the ICT. Similarly, the ICT seemed that he did not fully acted upon his role within the school. His engagement with the school activities was not apparent but it was essential for the promotion of inclusion, which was restricted within the premises of the IC.

The formation of an understanding of '*vague inclusion*', with regards to the school structure, indicates three main issues: the teachers' role within a school which is in theory inclusive (establishment of IC), students' wellbeing, and the role of IC. These will be unfolded taking into consideration the general Greek societal construction of the schools.

The role of the teacher, for instance, may involve a commitment in ensuring that the pupils can achieve their full personal and educational potential, to establish

fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships. The role of the teacher may involve promoting learners' independence, cooperation, wellbeing, self-awareness and self-esteem. The aim of the teacher involves supporting all the students and operate under equal opportunities. Besides exploring the features that may illustrate the teachers' role, as well as their duties and responsibilities, a key question in relation to Greek reality would be: what are the barriers or factors within the school and the sociopolitical environment that constrained teachers from acquiring this role that ensuring the students' wellbeing in School A? Some of the barriers have already been identified and were located in the constant educational reforms, lack of knowledge and experience regarding SEN, the demanding curricula, the achievements, the crowded classes and the existence of PI. But, how does the above explain the lack of provision for the students with SEN that did not have friends? Possibly, a closer look into the abovementioned factors and especially the phenomenon of 'grades-mania' as it was described by the GCT A, might provide some answers.

The overly centralised nature of the Greek educational system, which is controlled by the Ministry of Education (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Giamouridis and Bagley, 2006; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006; Georgiadis, 2005), leaves little room for schools and educators to be innovative, creative and involve in activities other than academic achievements. However, there is a paradox to the ways that the system operates. Although, schools are forced to uniformity, at the same time, teachers enjoy much freedom and power over their classrooms; they have in theory the freedom to approach their lessons the way they consider is the most productive -based on the curriculum demands- (Georgiadis, 2005; Vlachou, 2006; Koustourakis, 2007). However, the bureaucratic nature of the system that forces educators to meet deadlines in terms of curriculum delivery distorts this nature of freedom. In this context, teachers are called to deliver an overloaded curriculum to students (Mitsoni, 2006), which mainly transform them to consumers of information and ignores students' individual needs, and abilities by forcing them to follow the same didactic material. Nonetheless, the understanding of the apparent deficiencies of the curriculum its formation and operation is not aiming to justify the stagnation of the pedagogical system or the linear approaches that educators choose to follow in lesson delivery and eventually neglect students' wellbeing. Within this context students' wellbeing is given less

importance, since the focus is on academic achievements. GCT do not have the time to focus on students with SEN as they disturb or slow-down the lesson. IC can be viewed as 'panacea', as it removes the problem since the responsibility is diverted to those who have the expertise (ICT) and therefore, they are free to deliver their lesson undisturbed.

At the same time, it should be noted, that the altruism, stamina and endeavors undertaken by particular educators are indeed examples of good pedagogical practice in Greece (Koutrouba et al., 2008). Possibly one of these examples was that of the GCT A in School A, who mentioned examples of actions that she took in order to ensure that all pupils in her class were well respected and accepted. However, her efforts did not involve her collaboration with the IC. Her explanation for that was her lack of SEN experience and knowledge, but she mentioned that if her support was needed she would have been happy to support. However, the unwillingness of the ICT to engage with the School A (as it was discussed before) might have also contributed to the lack of cooperation. According to Fotopoulos (2009), the exemptions cannot justify the national tendency of inequalities in expenditures, infrastructure and pedagogical methods. Neither can be used as examples of an inclusive educational philosophy and praxis informed and directed by policy, since those initiatives are individualistic and guided by personal effort. Participants expressed similar opinions that good practice is subject to teachers' personal qualities.

Moreover, the globalisation of education has created new sets of needs and expectations (Zambakopoulos and Constantelou, 2002; Illeris, 2003). In this context, the Greek school by trying to adapt to this new world, is transforming into a market place that "contributes to raising peoples' economic productivity" rather than, "raising human wellbeing" (Stewart, 1996, p.328). Within this context, the aim and the purpose of the school and the teachers is placed on achievements rather than individual needs and wellbeing. The school prepares the future employees. Nevertheless, the main cultural values that govern Greek families are found in the belief that their children need to be educated (in terms of acquiring an academic degree) to become valuable members of the society (Venieratou, 2009). According to the Teachers' Union, "a vast number of secondary education students are oriented toward universities, which means that we have high demand for university education; about 80% of the students demand a university

education, while in European countries only 45% of them do" (Zambeta, 2002, p.461).

In this context, for most families, education (*ekpaideusi* but not *paideia*) is a product that guarantees their children's access in tertiary education (Mitsoni, 2006). Maybe, this understanding might explain the character of the IC, focused on knowledge and acquisition of skills, so students eventually will move to the GC full-time and gain a place in the market place. Higher education becomes a priori precondition for their children in order to achieve a theoretically successful life, where, in many cases, children's successful access in to higher education becomes parents' personal success; which can be extremely stressful for children. The existing conditions, besides being demanding and stressful for the students, also contribute to the diminution of the "mission" and character of the Greek school which was meant to be pedagogical and inclusive (Zambeta, 2002). In this context, according to a recent study of the GPI, the Greek schools, instead of promoting students' welfare, schools produce anxiety, insecurity, boredom and disappointment to them (Fotopoulos, 2009).

According to the study of the National Centre of Social Studies (NCSS) (2006). 97% of primary students believed that their parents want them to achieve good grades. The teachers stated that the current system creates the pathology of the good student which is the outcome of their parents' pressure (59,6%). The students stated that they believed that there is distinction in the class between 'good' and 'bad' students and that the teachers were more positive towards the 'good' students. The characteristics of the 'bad' student as described by the teachers were: 93,8% does not pay attention to the lesson, 53,5% do not evolve in the class, 39,2% are not well behaved and 26% are not very 'intelligent'. Possible reasons for school failure were identified: 78,7% of the teachers believed that students could not comprehend the curriculum, 77,9% of teachers believed it was because students were not interested in learning (Lakasa, 2007).

The distinction between socially constructed students as 'good' and 'bad' (Luke, 1997), the fact that students believed that teachers differentiated the 'bad' students but also that the characteristics of the 'bad' students possibly lowers the status of the students with SEN in the mainstream class. Taking into consideration the findings from School A, where participants stated that it is not

possible for the students with SEN to follow the curriculum, it might explain the reasons that GCTs, might have diverted the responsibility for the students-participants learning to the ICT and considered the IC as an environment that responds better to the students' needs. The GCT B said that students will believe what we tell them. Similarly, students might follow teachers' example and act as they act. If GCT do not include students with SEN in their class, possibly the rest of the class will not involve them in activities and games.

Soulis (2008) locates the issues that contribute to the ineffective implementation of the recent educational reforms to the role of educators and their relationship with students, parents and other stakeholders. He argues that the role of teacher and their attitudes are vital for the accomplishment of a "School for All". In his study, he used structured questionnaires to examine teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their beliefs about its effective implementation. The outcomes of the study showed that Greek teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were positive but their actual intentions and behaviours may have been different due to various constraints that they encountered and interfered with the proper implementation of the policy. Nonetheless, as Ingstad (2005) argues, the articulation of certain statements about beliefs and thoughts that a person holds towards a group, an individual or a condition does not always determine neither the actual behaviour nor an outcome. Mainly, because, attitudes are considered to be dynamic in character, socially and culturally constructed. Soulis (2008) argued that besides the evident insufficiencies of supportive services and aids, teachers are the key features of the actualisation of inclusion. Therefore, he suggested six Western educational models that if followed they will lead to more productive pedagogical practices to accomplish inclusion. Indeed the role of educators in the development of any educational reform is essential for its proper implementation. However, before loading educators with more duties we need to conceptualise and reconceptualise all the factors that reached a deadlock that calls for change. In Greece, teaching methods reflect and are based on social assumptions and constructions that are taken for granted without questioning their effectiveness and applications and create barriers for further development of alternative approaches in practice that are relevant to students' needs (Ainscow, 1998).

However, "for teachers to be able to think of themselves as collaborators in a change process, the whole environment has to be transformed...in order to

involve them meaningfully and not mechanically” (Katrarou and Tsafos, 2008, p.126-131). It is important to analyse and explore the actual relationship between students and teachers within the Greek educational setting before enforcing further reformatations to teachers’ pedagogical approaches. It is also important to understand teachers’ role and the ethical, ideological and intellectual principles that guide their action within an environment that is changing and decisions are not constant. There are cases where inclusion does succeed but it is based on the teachers’ personal work and commitment to support all students learning-without necessarily working within an inclusive model. This description, though, is evident locally and does not reflect the Greek reality of inclusive educational practice (Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideri, 2000).

The current educational situation in Greece clearly points out that conceptualisation and continuity is needed. However, teachers’ behaviour, attitudes, perceptions, teaching methods and approaches cannot merely be directed to a different path and modified due to reforms in policy. Alteration should not be merely at legislative level but equally at ideological and practical level with the development of school ethos where students’ needs, difficulties and achievements are equally appreciated, embraced, respected and teachers’ collaboration and input is vital. The development of a society and a school ethos that will acknowledge and embrace the role of the person within the community and will not reinforce “individual materialism” and further discriminative practices (Bayliss, 2003). In doing that, it is possible that change may be needed first at local level and be relevant to the needs of specific communities to finally achieve change at a state level. The following chapter provides the final conclusions, the contribution and limitations of the case study, as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter six: Final conclusions

The present thesis has explored the nature and operation of ICs in School A. The findings were conceptualised taking into consideration different factors: 1) the Greek SEN policy, 2) the understanding of inclusion within the Greek context and 3) the general socio-economic situation in Greece. Final conclusions will be drawn based on the above and taking in consideration the initial research interests.

Conceptualising the findings at internal school level and at state level

At internal school level

The findings suggested that the operation and the nature of ICs as an expression of inclusion was not successfully implemented. IC in School A, with regards to inclusion policy, could be better described as a designated class for students with SEN that provided tutoring in core subjects (literacy/mathematics). In theory, the scope of the IC was to promote inclusion by offering additional SEN support to students and teachers within the general school. In practice that was not apparent mainly because 1) the concept of inclusion was mainly understood and expressed as a practice for SEN, 2) SEN provision was only available in the IC, 3) the main focus in IC was the acquisition of knowledge and skills (literacy/mathematics), 4) the IC was isolated from the general school, 5) the social aspects of inclusion were not promoted in the school or supported by the teachers, 6) cooperation was not attempted between the staff in ICT and GCT, 7) the external services that supported and monitored the IC's operation and the students with SEN were insufficient and 8) the outcomes for the student-participants were mainly academic (although, academic progress cannot be determined given that all student-participants attended PIs) and no peer interaction was recorded.

At state level

Based on the findings, it can be suggested that the policy was not successfully implemented 1) due to inadequate external services (KEDDY/SEN SA) provided to IC, 2) internal services (IEPs/no provision in GC/unsuitable IC) and 3) within the school environment no social aspects of learning were observed.

Overall, the view about inclusion did not stem directly from the policy documents. It was rather based on the general understandings about the philosophy of inclusion from the Greek literature review, the academia, the political debates and the international SEN educational orientation (Messaritakis and Goudiros, 2013; Sutherland and Siola, 2013; Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Zoniou-Sideri, 2004; Vlachou, 2006). As was discussed before, the philosophy of inclusion as an orientation, within the policy documents, has not been defined explicitly. It was rather an assumption based 1) on references to inclusion, like for example: *“The state legally certifies the right of people with disabilities and SEN in education, social and professional inclusion”* (Law 3699, article 1) and 2) the fact that the designated classes that will provide special *agogi* and education were named ICs. The word *agogi* has also not been defined with regards to SEN and education.

The policy should aim to be explicit and detailed regarding the SEN philosophy and educational models that are adopted and infused within the Greek schools, as to avoid confusion and *vague inclusive practices*. If IC is one of the models or expressions of inclusive educational philosophy, then its purpose and operation needs to be clearly defined and explained, not merely be outlined and subject to the practitioners and parents’ interpretations. So, parents and teachers will also have a clear understanding about what they are offered, what to expect and therefore what to claim for: academic inclusion versus social inclusion or both? ICs systematic monitoring within the school, not only from associated members, should be promoted. A detailed description regarding ICTs’ and GCTs’ duties with practical examples of how duties are expected to be executed will enhance teachers’ practice (Strogilos and Avramidis, 2013).

If we assume that all the external and internal services are operating adequately and teachers have the professional knowledge to provide SEN support, then the

discourses should move to the students' actual needs, wants and voice. Are the current arrangements actually benefiting students' needs? What are the needs of students with SEN and how can they be met within the current educational system? For example, Norwich (1996), proposed three sets of needs: 1) individual needs, 2) group needs and 3) common needs. These sets of needs or similar understandings about needs have not been conceptualised in depth and explanations not been provided by the state. For example, the student-participants said that learning in School A and IC was not joyful (lack of creative activities) and they wished to have more friends. A discourse around needs, will eventually lead or stem from a discourse around education and SEN. The discourse should eventually reveal the type of education the state is aiming to provide that explains the necessity of inclusion and ICs. In addition, it should be clear whether the ICs are the outcome of political proclaims and pressure groups (parents and associations) or the outcome of a clear pedagogical philosophy that is relevant and situated within the Greek context; where the state takes in consideration its capacity to provide this philosophy. Labropoulou (2014), using a rather sharp language, argues that special education is provided by appointing temporary teachers, who in majority are unskilled and the ICs are absolutely disorganised. She argues that what the state provides, is new SEN policies before every upcoming elections, to demonstrate the 'brilliant work' they design for the 'children of a lesser God'.

All discourses, discussed above, and levels of conceptualisation should be a priori requirement to inform policy and to plan the practice based on clear definitions and strong ontological, epistemological and methodological understandings. Once a policy is designed, with clear vision and axioms, its implementation (at pilot level) can identify effectiveness or appropriateness. On this basis, understandings (at local level) can inform policy and policy can inform practice that will eventually lead to reforms or advancement of existing practices. At the moment, these understandings have not been provided and any considerations about the formation of the policy are based on assumptions. It can be argued that inclusion has been implemented in Greece by providing methodological tools (in-class support, *parallel support*, ICs). Any in-depth ontological (education/inclusion) or epistemological (system of categories/system of students' actual needs) conceptualisation and explanation was not attempted.

Funding is another vital aspect that should also be identified in order to support any practice at financial level. It should be remembered that when Parent A applied for *parallel support*, she was not very optimistic because the staff in the local KEDDY told her that promises in theory are made but in practice they are not delivered. In Greece it seems that most of the omissions have at first level a common factor: Lack of capital, to successfully implement pedagogical endeavours. In the absence of continuous capital, vision and systematic qualitative data (to determine the actual practice within the ICs and SEN provision) the discourse around inclusion and SEN will remain rhetoric and a diversion around responsibilities and accountability. A vicious circle with arrows that point either to the state, or the services, or the resources, or the teachers, or the parents, or the students. The campaign in 2010 proclaimed the 'New School', 'The Student is the Centre'. In 2014 the 'New School' has not been presented but most importantly ICs are closing and ICTs are reappointed or relocated to special schools to fill in the gaps in personnel. More precisely, in September 2013, it was reported by the Association of Teachers in Chalkida (Greek city) that 11 ICTs have been moved from ICs to special schools in that region (Teachers Association of Chalkida, 2013). Similarly, in September 2013, the Associations of Teachers in another county reported that the ICs are shutting down on the basis that personnel is needed in the special schools (FTG, 2013). The PanHellenic Association of SEN Teachers, reported that for the school year 2013-2014, the infrastructure and resources for special education are insufficient, ICs were shutting down and the political promises have not been kept (ref). In December 2013, a similar case has been reported in other schools (Silivani, 2013). Within this context, the future of the 'New School' and the emphasis on the student remain rhetoric. The Greek educational context is characterised by 'vague practices' and 'vague inclusion' and at both cases the students are affected. How do we move forward from a discourse of omissions to an actual practice?

Possibly the way forward would be to initially identify whether the current provision for SEN is beneficial for the students in IC by employing qualitative studies, that will eventually inform the practice. Qualitative data can provide a more holistic understanding and possibly provide answers to the questions based on day-to-day data and not on general state assumptions that cannot capture the everyday reality (Lawson et al., 2013). Qualitative data can identify not only gaps

in practice but also examples of practice that can be applied in other schools to enhance knowledge and practice. In order to move forward there is a need for the policy to operate at pilot level before it is implemented. A pilot project where possibly most of the external services (infrastructure, resources, and personnel) will be effectively working, to identify whether in 'full' conditions, for example, cooperation will still be lacking between staff or the social aspects of inclusion. However, this is a long-term goal, what about the immediate future?

One possible way would be to follow the suggestions of Zoniou-Sideri (2004) and Soulis (2008). The immediate and long-term future lies with the teachers. However, their immediate involvement (willingness to cooperate/embrace change), at the moment, is subject to their personality and pedagogical views. However, within every school or a school in every county there are teachers who are willing to experiment, learn more and are oriented at first level towards wellbeing and then towards achievements. The HT and the GCT A were two examples in School A. An example of inclusive practice is provided by a SEN SA in a primary school in Athens, where the parents and the students were not positive towards the placement of the students with SEN in the mainstream. Within this environment the SEN SA decided to take drastic measures and developed an action plan. Neither cooperation nor awareness were easy tasks but with everyday dialogue with the students and having the teachers' support, the students with SEN eventually became equal members of the school (Hatzitheologidou, 2002). The aim of presenting this case here is to emphasise that, even within an environment that is reluctant towards mainstream education, lacks cooperation and possibly resources, inclusion can be supported with action plans and willingness. If local actions are published by the Ministry of Education (and become known to schools), those can be used as examples to possibly reinforce the practice of those who probably know less, but, are willing to know more. Possibly the HT in School A, who questioned the establishment of ICs on the basis that it was isolated and stigmatising, might have been more actively involved in a project that could reduce segregation. Given the uniformity that characterises the Greek educational system, where every service, every practice, every book in every school around the country is common for all (Zoniou-Sideri, 2004a, 2004b), then if one school can achieve change, then every school can.

The final point is that inclusion should also emerge as a practice from within the schools not merely within the policy-makers and academia. *'Inclusion has to be arrived within a decision-making processes that are inclusive in nature'* (Nilholm, 2006, p.442). Most importantly, inclusion or change should capture everyday life that is evident at local level. Instead of the state only trying to 'accept' responsibility by changing the terminology in order to correct omissions, possibly the schools can also take responsibility as active implementers instead of constantly demanding better conditions. If attention is directed to schools in terms of formulating practices, then engagement can become a prerequisite. If the orientation for example is 'if one school can do it, then all schools can', the focal point of the discourse, is the practice that stems from the schools and from the students and then to the state. In a discourse that is based on the 'New School', then the focal point is the state that should provide to the schools, so they can provide to the students, the practice arises and is suggested from the top, not from within the schools (bottom).

To conclude I will borrow again the words of the Minister of Education (as cited in Zambeta, 2002, p.614): "We have a system that is difficult to be described". Within this system there is a general tendency to revise policy documents and guidelines introduce and re-introduce borrowed notions to justify given insufficiencies. However, these adaptations do not follow supplementary or explanation documents with specific actions that the practitioners should follow in order to implement the educational programmes and guidelines or the stipulation of policy reforms. Documents of any kind remain generic and do not inform day-to-day practice. Moreover, lack of funding in most of the occasions is a barrier that restricts the implementation of the stipulations of the law. In combination with the lack of in-depth ontological, epistemological and methodological issues around SEN the seminars and training available to teachers remains generic and theoretical rather than practical and explanatory. In addition, the fact that the IC has never run as a pilot project leaves little room for evaluation of its appropriateness and monitoring of its operation. It has been implemented and accepted as a default practice rather than a work in progress whose operation should be subject to its outcomes. Furthermore, most teachers are not familiar with the context of the laws; in particular in School A, teachers did not read the laws. Within this context, the practice in schools and specifically in

School A was characterised by generic and superficially implemented practices. Practices that did not support the students' social participation in the whole school and their academic learning was primarily located in the IC. This created a notion of separatism and isolation between the IC and the GC teachers and students. In addition, the ICT's attitude towards School A (ICT did not interact with the school staff and did not participate in school activities) contributed to this separatism that minimised cooperation and created a notion of otherness (the IC was viewed as an external class). A first step to creating a possibly more inclusive environment with regards to School A and the IC would have possibly been for the ICT to become a more active member in the school. In terms of providing resources, training and advice to the GCTs. In addition, students' social participation and engagement with other students would have probably been more active and reinforced if the ICT had interacted with all students in the school. Possibly during the breaks, plan fun games for all students in order to engage the IC students in activities with other pupils. In addition, strategies like student buddies (during the play-time and within the GC) or circle of friends organised in both the GC and IC (by inviting students from GC to IC) would have possibly created a feeling of togetherness and cooperation rather than separatism. Although, in some countries these minor or major adaptations in practice may seem self-evident, in Greece they need to be acknowledged. These type of practices (oriented towards the social aspects of learning), if attempted it is possible to move away from the stereotyped model of IC as an internal *frodistirio* and move towards more welcoming and inclusive environments. An environment where the primary scope will not be the acquisition of knowledge but rather the wellbeing and joy of students in all schools in order to form a "School for All" or the "New School". Within this context, empowerment of teachers to take responsibility towards inclusion and students' voice are considered significant. Local practice is also an essential aspect that can inform policy to capture day-to-day practice and design frameworks that reflect and are more relevant to educators and students.

Contributions of the study

The contributions of the findings of this study have not only been its design, ideas and proposals that provide a distinctive and immediate answer to the fundamental educational issues regarding ICs operation, inclusion and SEN in Greece. Its contribution can be considered its exploratory character that employed qualitative methods of both data collection and analysis within a context (IC) that has not been studied in depth but has been discussed extensively at theoretical level. There is a gap in studies regarding ICs as it was identified in the literature review. Although there have been some studies that have explored the nature of ICs or the views of the teachers in the ICs, these have generally employed questionnaires or other quantitative tools with large samples. Without diminishing the importance of every research design and project, their contribution has been on specific matters or with the aim to support the defectology and negativity that governs the field or in some occasions promoting the state decisions by identifying the inclusive character of the ICs and its significant importance. This particular study is context specific and involves a very small sample of participants and generalisations cannot be made. However, the centralised character of the educational setting might find the 'conclusions' of this study possibly relevant or of similar nature to other primary schools (including practitioners, students and parents) in Greece. More specifically, the significance of this study is its contribution in an in-depth understanding and dialogue about the operation of the IC by involving all its receptors and endeavouring into an analysis and conceptualisation of the data by placing focus on the general socio-political context and not on specific categories of SEN; with the aim to produce a collective picture of the Greek educational reality to eventually contribute to the effective discourse of SEN and inclusion, as well as, planning and policy making based on grounded data.

Limitations in the study

The researcher's engagement at all levels of the data collection and analysis might have brought some level of bias in the formation of the final theory.

However, this was eliminated by ensuring the trustworthiness of the study as was described in the methodology chapter. In addition, the fact that the study was subject to time limitations (one and a half months was spent in the school) might have interfered with the saturation of the data, in the sense that the saturation was time specific. Another limitation was that observations were not allowed in the GC. Observations in the IC would have provided a more actual and holistic understanding of the students. If all parents were interviewed, more holistic understandings would have been possible about students and process based on both parents' views. Another limitation was that the SEN SA did not provide a complete interview. In addition, the ICT did not wish to be recorded, a condition that interfered with the fluency of the interview. Moreover, if all GCTs had agreed to provide a formal interview more data would have been available and contributed to the emergent themes. Finally, during the course of the study, further document data were intended to be gathered including: school documents/reports, students' progress reviews, students' stories (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004). However, copies of documents such as statements, IEPs, students' progress or school reviews were restricted as they were classified as confidential, and according to the school regulations only teachers and parents had permission to access these documents.

Recommendations for future research

The literature review, of this study has pointed out the lack of studies around ICs and the policy review and the findings of this study denote the multidimensional character that governs the gaps that have been identified. The factors and the reasons for the omissions are numerous and interrelated. Insufficiencies cannot be pointed towards one direction and then suggest one single research design to find solutions. The character of the ICs and special education in Greece needs to be specified and the reasons for the choice of ICs as an expression of inclusive philosophy needs to be clear, as well as, the borders between special and general education. For that reason there is a need for in-service research by the school personnel, that will possibly help to raise awareness around SEN and promote collaboration between staff, but most importantly, it will provide the pilot study

and the policy draft before additional reforms and educational programmes be implemented in the Greek schools. Greece does not need further educational programmes and policies, first the schools need to understand the current practice and become more familiar with the latest developments, as well as, with the Law and its speculations before employing new measures. SEN and inclusion need to become a primary concern of the educators in the schools, they should feed the academic and political community with new information and practices, not be passive recipients of policies and educational programmes. As Zoniou-Sideri pointed out in 2004, the matter of SEN and inclusion should be dealt by the teachers, they need to take action.

Further to that, certain questions have emerged from this study that could be further explored in future research to identify why students in School A were apparently isolated and why provision was mainly located in the IC. Most importantly, research could explore further what inclusion means for, and within, the Greek society and schools. It could investigate how inclusion could be better implemented in the mainstream schools to make practices relevant and responsive to students' needs with the aim to reduce stigma and students' isolation. The aim should be to develop an inclusive system grounded within the Greek culture and identify the current meaning of *paideia* rather than be based on a borrowed educational system that differs in terms of culture and understandings of *paideia*. *Paideia* is evident in every country and as it was mentioned in previous chapters it is context specific, it is an intellectual product that is inherited, transmitted and influenced by political and societal ideologies, tendencies and attitudes. Therefore, *paideia* is also dynamic and reflects the contemporary life. Therefore, future research can serve to provide answers to questions that are grounded within the Greek educational system, its *paideia* and lead to inclusion and inclusive communities rather than isolated minorities within theoretically inclusive settings.

For that reason, future recommendations for study, would be:

- 1) A series of parallel small scale in-service studies with the collection of qualitative data from every school around the country. The aim would be to identify the omissions but also successful practices and create an official database that will provide information for good practice and eventually will identify

a general practice regarding SEN in Greece. A practice that will be inclusive in character but would not necessarily be called inclusion or inclusive education. Greece needs to form its own inclusion, its own identity based on its idiosyncratic character that will provide results and eventually close the various gaps identified in its establishment. This type of research might be long and time-consuming, costly and will require many human resources. If the design of the study is in-service, then the human resources are already available. Therefore, the study should be conducted by teachers with the participation of the students and their parents. Not every school in the country is facing the same issues and this needs to be identified by focusing on both ineffective programmes but also successful examples of good practice. This type of endeavour is proposed to be attempted under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Quantitative data (which have not yet been updated) about the SEN infrastructure, resources and number of ICs and special schools in the country are necessary to provide a statistical description about SEN in Greece and their facilities, as well as, the sufficiency or insufficiency of the resources available for SEN practice. Matters that point towards the philosophy of inclusion can only be addressed and possibly regulated by taking a closer look into the nature of the school units and by connecting all the members involved in this process.

2) In addition a similar study needs to be attempted regarding the nature and the operation of KEDDYs, an establishment that has not been given any importance in terms of research as well as, a series of in depth studies that look into the unofficially constituted phenomenon *parapaideia*.

Conclusion

A distinction that needs to be made is whether inclusion refers to a process or an environment. If inclusion is seen as an educational environment that influences students to reach their potential and participate in a setting that they feel they belong, rather than a process that refers and determines the place of accommodation based on specific criteria; then, it is in question whether IC is the best environment for all students in Greece. If inclusion is a democratic ideal, the environment that students are educated in must be a choice and not a

requirement or an outcome of a policy (Low, 2007; Cigman, 2007); otherwise, mainstreaming for many students “will mean involuntary inclusion” (p.xvi, Cigman, 2007).

Nevertheless, inclusion is neither an either/or nor a straightforward concept and practice. Those who accept decisions or those who strongly advocate for and those who are opposed to inclusion need to reconsider their strong positions and possibly readjust them based on the children’s actual wants and needs. For the reason that, inclusion is initially a matter of students being in a welcoming educational environment where they feel that they belong and can actively participate in the social and learning process; along with that comes their right of choice of allocation. Only when essential qualities are secured for students, they can truly flourish personally, socially and intellectually.

Nilholm (2006) writes: “different conceptualisations of democracy lead to completely different understandings of inclusion” (p.432). Using Nilholm’s wording, I would argue that the conceptualisation and problematisation of the Greek educational system based on its *paideia*, cultural context and heritage will lead to a different but certainly more transparent understanding of inclusion. Rather than embodying imported practices, which may be successfully implemented in other countries, it is essential to understand why educational and pedagogical methods and practices do not thrive within a culture. Before inviting schools to readjust their methods we need to explore their views and their reservations regarding the current pedagogical practices and how those can be developed. Finally, the question of how schools understand inclusion should precede the question of whether they support it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: General framework of interviews (*Interview with the students*)

How old are you?

Which Year group are you in?

What is the name of your teachers and the classes you attend?

Can you describe to me your daily school timetable?

Can you tell me a few things about Mr. D's class?

Do you enjoy being in Mr. D's class?

Can you now tell me a few things about your regular class?

Can you describe to me the reasons you attend the class of Mr. D?

Do you have any preferences regarding the two classes?

Can you describe to me a day in the school during the break-time?

Can you tell me more things about your friends in the school?

Can you describe to me your after-school activities?

Appendix 2: General framework of interviews (Interview with parents)

Can you tell me a few things about how you understand inclusion?

Can you tell me your views about the SEN policy in Greece?

Can you describe to me the processes you followed when you noticed (and how did you notice) that your child might need extra support at school?

How did you feel about the outcome of diagnosis?

Can you tell me a few things about your expectations from obtaining a diagnosis?

Did you get another opinion regarding diagnosis from an external agency?

Can you tell me a few things about your expectations from IC and your child's participation in IC?

Can you tell me a few things about your relationship with the teachers?

How do you describe the communication with the school and the teachers?

Can you tell me based on your experience a few things about your views regarding IC's operation?

Can you tell me a few things about your child's experience in the IC based on both your opinion and your child's experiences?

Have you noticed any difference in your child's development since he/she attended the IC?

Is there something that can be done within the school to better support your child's learning and general development?

Appendix 3: General framework of interviews (*Interviews with GCTs*)

Can you tell me your views about the SEN policy in Greece?

What are your thoughts about the policy in the ways that it is applied in the School?

What is *paideia*?

Can you tell me a few things about how you understand inclusion?

What are your views about IC?

What according to your views is the role of the ICT?

Can you tell me based on your views if IC supports inclusion?

Can you tell me a few things about your relationship with the students and the parents?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the school?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the SA?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the KEDDY?

Can you tell me your views about the role of GCT in inclusion?

Can you describe to me how students are supported in GC?

Are there any factors that you think might restrain your involvement with SEN provision?

I have noticed that the students who attend the IC do not have many friends, can you tell me a few more things about that?

Appendix 4: General framework of interviews (*Interview with ICT*)

Can you tell me your views about the SEN policy in Greece?

What are your thoughts about the policy in the ways that it is applied in the School?

What is *paideia*?

Can you tell me a few things about how you understand inclusion?

What are your views about IC?

What according to your views is the role of the ICT?

Can you tell me based on your views if IC supports inclusion?

Can you tell me a few things about your relationship with the students and the parents?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the school?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the SA?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the KEDDY?

Can you tell me according to your opinion and experience in School A what are parents' expectations regarding their children's participation in IC?

I have noticed that the students who attend the IC do not have many friends, can you tell me a few more things about that?

Appendix 5: General framework of interviews (*Interview with HT*)

Can you tell me your views about the SEN policy in Greece?

What are your thoughts about the policy in the ways that it is applied in the School?

What is *paideia*?

Can you tell me a few things about how you understand inclusion?

When did the first IC operated in your school?

What are your views about IC?

Have you noticed any difference between the SC and the IC?

What according to your views is the role of the ICT?

Can you tell me based on your views if IC supports inclusion?

Can you tell me a few things about your relationship with the students and the parents?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the school?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the SA?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other staff in the KEDDY?

I have noticed that in your school IC is most of the times described as ST or people refer to it as the class of Mr. D, can you tell me a few things about that?

I have noticed that the students who attend the IC do not have many friends, can you tell me a few more things about that?

Appendix 6: General framework of interviews (Interview with SEN SA)

Can you tell me your views about the SEN policy in Greece?

What are your thoughts about the policy in the ways that it is applied in the Schools?

What is *paideia*?

Can you tell me a few things about how you understand inclusion?

What are your views about IC?

Through interviews with other participants it came into my attention that IC can lead in some occasions to stigma. What are your thoughts on that?

What are your general duties?

Can you tell me a few things about KEDDY and their operation?

Can you tell me a few things about your visits at school?

Appendix 7: General framework of interviews Observations –Note Books-

Notebook one

Observations from IC	Observations from IC
<p>Day one: Monday 18th /8.15am/IC</p> <p>There are 3 students in the IC (from different year groups but all students are taught together and are given the same activities). The teacher said that they do 10 to 15 hours per week. The room is small and can barely fit more than 4 students. There is hardly space for me. I am sitting opposite the ICT and I am facing the students. There are two desks that are attached and the students are sitting around these two tables. There are no pictures in the walls. At the moment they are doing grammar activities. They are all quiet and each time they finish an activity they show it to the ICT. The ICT is correcting them and they continue working on the same activity until the activity is correct.</p>	<p>Day one: Monday 18th /10.05am/IC</p> <p>One student (D) in the IC. The lesson started with the teacher asking the student about his previous day at home. Now the ICT gave to the teacher some reading activities. The ICT is pointing the word and the student is expected to read it. When the student is confused the ICT breaks the word in syllables. They are reading words with two syllables. They have been that now for almost 30 minutes. The student is saying that he is tired but the ICT said that they need to finish the activities and then they will have a break. The student takes longer to reply now and the ICT has to repeat 3 or 4 times the same question. The ICT seems calm but his voice does not sound as calm. They now have a break and the student is talking to me.</p>

Notebook two

Observations during break-time (school play area/staff room)	Date/Time/Number of Students
<p>Day one</p> <p>Everybody have welcomed me in the staff room. I have been offered coffee and GCTs approached me to ask me if I was a new cover teacher. After explaining the reasons for being in the school the teachers asked me more things about my study. The ICT shown me the way to the staff room but then he said that he had something to do and he will see me back in the IC.</p>	Monday 18 th /9.45am/Staff room
<p>Day two</p> <p>Students have been playing mainly alone during break-time. One of the students (C) has been following the duty teachers during each break. Student A spent most of the break outside the staff room alone. Student B was running around the school and Student D was with another girl during the second break but then she went at her GC.</p>	Tuesday 19 th for 3 breaks

Notebook three

Researcher's understandings	Notes
<p>Day one</p> <p>"All students seemed to cooperate with each other. Student D was very talkative and very curious about my presence he was keep on asking me why I am in the IC and why I am writing so much. He also wanted to see my notes. All students seemed to pay attention to me during the lesson as they were kept on looking at me..."</p> <p>Day 31</p> <p>"Another day has finished, I have nothing different to reflect today regarding the observations in the IC. I now remembered that Parent C mentioned that KEDDY did not have child psychiatrist, there seems that KEDDY might be understaff, I need to check the legislation again and prepare my interview for tomorrow."</p>	<p>They only did grammar and maths activities today all day!</p>

Appendix 8: Approval for research and consent form from the school (in Greek)



ΕΝΗΜΕΡΩΤΙΚΟ ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΜΜΕΤΟΧΗΣ ΓΙΑ ΓΟΝΕΙΣ

Αγαπητέ Διευθυντά ή Διευθύντρια,

Με το παρόν έντυπο σας ζητείται η άδεια για να πραγματοποιηθεί στο σχολείο σας η ερευνητική μελέτη που σκοπό έχει να κατανοήσει την σχολική ένταξη των μαθητών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, με συμμετέχοντες εσάς, τους δασκάλους τους μαθητές των τμημάτων ένταξης (ΤΕ) και τους γονείς των μαθητών. Η διδακτορική έρευνα έχει τίτλο «Η ένταξη των παιδιών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στα δημόσια σχολεία της πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευσης» και θα πραγματοποιηθεί από την Κωσταντία Διαλεκτάκη υπό την επίβλεψη του Δρ. Philip Bayliss και του Δρ. Ηλία Αβραμίδη του Πανεπιστημίου του Έξετερ του Έξετερ της Αγγλίας.

Η παρούσα έρευνα σκοπό έχει να μελετήσει τις εκπαιδευτικές νομοθετικές αλλαγές που έχουν συντελεστεί τα τελευταία χρόνια στην ειδική αγωγή στην Ελλάδα και να εξερευνήσει το κατά πόσο η πρακτική εφαρμογή αυτών των μεταρρυθμίσεων έχει συμβάλει και επηρεάσει την εκπαιδευτική κοινότητα και πιο συγκεκριμένα τους μαθητές με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στα τμήματα ένταξης της δημόσιας πρωτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης στην Κεντρική και Βόρεια Ελλάδα.

Πιο συγκεκριμένα, σκοπός της παρούσας έρευνας είναι η συστηματική μελέτη και ανάλυση των ελληνικών εκπαιδευτικών σχεδίων νόμου (Ν. 2817/200 και Ν. 3699/2008) και το νομοθετικό διάταγμα (Π.Δ. 301/1996) ώστε να καταστήσει κατανοητή την επίδραση αυτών των αλλαγών ή αποφάσεων πάνω στην εκπαιδευτική εμπειρία και μάθηση των παιδιών. Θα επιχειρηθεί η αποσαφήνιση των νόμων και διατάξεων περί ειδικής αγωγής ώστε να επιτευχθεί η σε βάθος κατανόηση της μετεξέλιξης της εκπαιδευτικής πολιτικής της ένταξης στην Ελλάδα.

Η παρούσα μελέτη δεν επιχειρεί να αξιολογήσει την ακαδημαϊκή επίδοση των μαθητών και να συγκρίνει τις σχολικές μονάδες (δημόσια σχολεία, ΤΕ, ειδικά σχολεία), ούτε και επικεντρώνεται στις ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες των μαθητών. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, η ερευνήτρια θα επιχειρήσει να μελετήσει την λειτουργία των ΤΕ (έχοντάς ως κύριο άξονα τις κοινωνικές παραμέτρους που συνδέονται με την ενταξιακή πολιτική) αντλώντας και

συνθέτοντας τις απόψεις όλων των εμπλεκόμενων φορέων σε αυτά (μαθητές ΤΕ, διευθυντές/δάσκαλοι ΤΕ και γονείς). Προκειμένου λοιπόν, να διερευνηθούν εις βάθος τα νοήματα που διέπουν συγκεκριμένες αποφάσεις και εκπαιδευτικές πρακτικές σε σχέση με την ιδέα της σχολικής ένταξης, η συμμετοχή των μαθητών και των εκπαιδευτικών καθώς και των γονέων θεωρείται αναγκαία καθώς αυτοί είναι οι κύριοι αποδέκτες των εκπαιδευτικών μεταρρυθμίσεων.

Τέλος, αναδεικνύοντας και συμπεριλαμβάνοντας τις απόψεις και τις εκπαιδευτικές εμπειρίες των συμμετεχόντων στα προαναφερόμενα θέματα, α) είναι άμεσης σημασίας για να κατανοήσουμε τους τρόπους με τους οποίους τα σχολεία, οι εκπαιδευτικοί και οι μαθητές λαμβάνουν την δέουσα υποστήριξη ώστε να μπορούν να συμμετέχουν ως ισότιμα και ενεργά μέλη στην ενταξιακή πολιτική και πράξη, β) είναι πολύ σημαντικό γιατί είναι πολύ πιθανό οι συμμετέχοντες να επισημάνουν ενδεχόμενα κενά ή αδυναμίες ανάμεσα στη πολιτική και την πράξη, γεγονός πολύ σημαντικό ώστε να δούμε κατά πόσο οι πιθανές αυτές αδυναμίες μπορεί να επηρεάζουν την μάθηση και την κοινωνική ένταξη των μαθητών και γ) οι εισηγήσεις των ίδιων των συμμετεχόντων μπορούν να συμβάλουν στο να επιτευχθεί μία πιο ποιοτική εφαρμογή της παιδαγωγικής της ένταξης.

Το Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο έχει ήδη χορηγήσει άδεια για την διεξαγωγή της παρούσας έρευνας, οπού υπεύθυνη για την έγκριση της έρευνας είναι η Δρ. Μαρία Δροσινού (Πάρεδρος με θητεία της ειδικής αγωγής-Μαθησιακές δυσκολίες). Η συμμετοχή σας είναι απόλυτα εθελοντική. Η συμμετοχή σας θα αφορά μία συνέντευξη που θα διαρκέσει περίπου μία ώρα. Κατά την διάρκεια της συνέντευξης θα ζητηθεί η άποψη σας σχετικά με την λειτουργία των τμημάτων ένταξης. Εάν αποφασίσετε να συμμετάσχετε στην παρούσα μελέτη θα πρέπει να κρατήσετε αυτό το ενημερωτικό έντυπο για δική σας αναφορά σε μεταγενέστερο στάδιο. Στο τέλος του θα βρείτε ένα έντυπο συγκατάθεσης συμμετοχής του σχολείου οποίο θα πρέπει να υπογράψετε και το οποίο θα παραλάβει η ερευνήτρια από το σχολείο.

Όλες οι πληροφορίες που θα συλλέξω θα είναι εμπιστευτικές. Όταν θα συγκεντρωθούν όλα τα στοιχεία για κάθε συμμετέχοντα, θα του δοθεί ένας αριθμός και το όνομα αυτού θα διαγραφεί. Οι πληροφορίες αυτές θα χρησιμοποιηθούν μόνο για το σκοπό της συγκεκριμένης έρευνας. Καμία πληροφορία για οποιοδήποτε συμμετέχοντα δεν θα δοθούν σε κανένα. Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας αυτής θα χρησιμοποιηθούν ως μέρος του Διδακτορικού μου με τίτλο τις Ειδικές Εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες (EdD-Doctor of Education Special Educational Needs) και ίσως δημοσιευθούν ή παρουσιαστούν σε κάποιο συνέδριο. Το σχολείο σας θα λάβει περίληψη των αποτελεσμάτων και εσείς μπορείτε, εάν το επιθυμείτε, να επικοινωνήσετε μαζί μου για τα αποτελέσματα στο τέλος της μελέτης.

Η έρευνα αυτή πραγματοποιείται από διδακτορική φοιτήτρια με την συνεργασία των επιβλεπόντων καθηγητών του προσωπικού από το Παιδαγωγικό τμήμα του Πανεπιστημίου Έξετερ της Αγγλίας. Η Επιτροπή Δεοντολογίας Ερευνών της Παιδαγωγικής σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου του Έξετερ έχει εγκρίνει τη συγκεκριμένη μελέτη.

Εάν έχετε οποιοσδήποτε απορίες που θα θέλατε να θέσετε πριν προχωρήσετε στην απόφασή σας, μη διστάσετε να επικοινωνήσετε μαζί μου στην ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση kd246@exeter.ac.uk ή στο τηλέφωνο 6948853973.

Σας ευχαριστώ που διαθέσατε το χρόνο σας για να ενημερωθείτε για αυτή την ερευνητική μελέτη.

Με εκτίμηση

Κωνσταντία Διαλεκτική

Πανεπιστήμιο του Έξετερ –

University of Exeter

Graduate School of Education



ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗΣ

Τίτλος Έρευνας:

«Η ένταξη των παιδιών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στα δημόσια σχολεία της πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευσης»

Όνομα και διεύθυνση επικοινωνίας της Ερευνήτριας:

Κωνσταντία Διαλεκτάκη

Πανεπιστήμιο του Έξετερ –

University of Exeter

Graduate School of Education

St Luke's Campus

Heavitree Road

Exeter

EX1 2LU

Email: kd246@exeter.ac.uk

Τηλ: 6932484248/00447772188447

Παρακαλώ υποδείξτε με V

1. Δηλώνω ότι έχω διαβάσει και κατανοώ το ενημερωτικό έντυπο που αφορά τη πιο πάνω μελέτη. ☐
2. Αντιλαμβάνομαι ότι τόσο η συμμετοχή μου είναι εθελοντική και ότι είμαι ελεύθερος/η να αποχωρήσω ανά πάσα στιγμή και χωρίς αιτιολογία. ☐
3. Συμφωνώ να συμμετάσχω στη πιο πάνω μελέτη. ☐

Όνομα Διευθυντή/Διευθύντριας

Ημερομηνία

Υπογραφή

Appendix 9: Consent forms for parents/students (in Greek)



ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗΣ

Αγαπητέ γονέα ή κηδεμόνα,

Με το παρόν έντυπο σας ζητείται όπως επιτρέψετε στο παιδί σας να συμμετάσχει σε μια ερευνητική μελέτη που σκοπό έχει να κατανοήσει την σχολική ένταξη των μαθητών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση. Η έρευνα έχει τίτλο «Η ένταξη των παιδιών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στα δημόσια σχολεία της πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευσης» και θα πραγματοποιηθεί από την Κωσταντία Διαλεκτάκη υπό την επίβλεψη του Δρ. Philip Bayliss και του Δρ. Ηλία Αβραμίδη.

Η παρούσα έρευνα σκοπό έχει να μελετήσει τις εκπαιδευτικές νομοθετικές αλλαγές που έχουν συντελεστεί τα τελευταία χρόνια στην ειδική αγωγή στην Ελλάδα και να εξερευνήσει το κατά πόσο η πρακτική εφαρμογή αυτών των μεταρρυθμίσεων έχει συμβάλει και επηρεάσει την εκπαιδευτική κοινότητα και πιο συγκεκριμένα τους μαθητές με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στα τμήματα ένταξης της δημόσιας πρωτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης στην Κεντρική και Βόρεια Ελλάδα.

Πιο συγκεκριμένα, σκοπός της παρούσας έρευνας είναι η συστηματική μελέτη και ανάλυση των ελληνικών εκπαιδευτικών σχεδίων νόμου (Ν. 2817/200 και Ν. 3699/2008) και των νομοθετικών διαταγμάτων (Π.Δ. 301/1996) ώστε να καταστήσει κατανοητή την επίδραση αυτών των αλλαγών ή αποφάσεων πάνω στην εκπαιδευτική εμπειρία και μάθηση των παιδιών. Θα επιχειρηθεί η αποσαφήνιση των νόμων και διατάξεων περί ειδικής αγωγής ώστε να επιτευχθεί η σε βάθος κατανόηση της μετεξέλιξης της εκπαιδευτικής πολιτικής της ένταξης στην Ελλάδα. Επιπλέον, η παρούσα μελέτη δεν επιχειρεί να αξιολογήσει την ακαδημαϊκή επίδοση των μαθητών και να συγκρίνει τις σχολικές μονάδες (δημόσια σχολεία, ΤΕ, ειδικά σχολεία), ούτε και επικεντρώνεται στις ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες των μαθητών. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, η ερευνήτρια θα επιχειρήσει να μελετήσει την λειτουργία των ΤΕ (έχοντάς ως κύριο άξονα τις κοινωνικές παραμέτρους που συνδέονται με την ενταξιακή πολιτική) αντλώντας και συνθέτοντας τις απόψεις όλων των εμπλεκόμενων φορέων σε αυτά (μαθητές ΤΕ, διευθυντές/δάσκαλοι ΤΕ και γονείς). Προκειμένου λοιπόν, να σκοπεύει να διερευνηθούν εις

βάθος τα νοήματα που διέπουν συγκεκριμένες αποφάσεις και εκπαιδευτικές πρακτικές σε σχέση με την ιδέα της σχολικής ένταξης ή συμμετοχή των μαθητών και των εκπαιδευτικών καθώς και των γονέων θεωρείται αναγκαία καθώς αυτοί είναι οι κύριοι αποδέκτες των εκπαιδευτικών μεταρρυθμίσεων.

Τέλος, αναδεικνύοντας και συμπεριλαμβάνοντας τις απόψεις και τις εκπαιδευτικές εμπειρίες των συμμετεχόντων στα προαναφερόμενα θέματα, α) είναι άμεσης σημασίας για να κατανοήσουμε τους τρόπους με τους οποίους τα σχολεία, οι εκπαιδευτικοί και οι μαθητές λαμβάνουν την δέουσα υποστήριξη ώστε να μπορούν να συμμετέχουν ως ισότιμα και ενεργά μέλη στην ενταξιακή πολιτική και πράξη, β) είναι πολύ σημαντικό γιατί είναι πολύ πιθανό οι συμμετέχοντες να επισημάνουν ενδεχόμενα κενά ή αδυναμίες ανάμεσα στη πολιτική και την πράξη, γεγονός πολύ σημαντικό ώστε να δούμε κατά πόσο οι πιθανές αυτές αδυναμίες μπορεί να επηρεάζουν την μάθηση και την κοινωνική ένταξη των μαθητών και γ) οι εισηγήσεις των ίδιων των συμμετεχόντων μπορούν να συμβάλουν στο να επιτευχθεί μία πιο ποιοτική εφαρμογή της παιδαγωγικής της ένταξης.

Η άδεια για την διεξαγωγή της έρευνας έχει ήδη εγκριθεί από το Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο, οπού υπεύθυνη για την έγκριση της έρευνας είναι η Δρ. Μαρία Δροσινού. Το σχολείο του παιδιού σας είχε τη καλοσύνη να αποδεχτεί να συμμετάσχει στην έρευνα και τώρα ζητάμε την άδεια σας όπως συμπεριλάβουμε το παιδί σας στην έρευνα. Η συμμετοχή του παιδιού σας είναι απόλυτα εθελοντική. Εναπόκειται σε σας να αποφασίσετε κατά πόσον θα επιτρέψετε ή όχι τη συμμετοχή του. Προτού τα παιδιά αρχίσουν να δουλεύουν με την ερευνήτρια, θα τους καταστεί σαφές ότι τους ζητείται να συμμετάσχουν σε μια έρευνα και θα τους δοθεί η ευκαιρία να υποδείξουν εάν το επιθυμούν ή όχι.

Η συμμετοχή τόσο του παιδιού σας όσο και η δική σας θα αφορά μία συνέντευξη που θα διαρκέσει περίπου μία ώρα. Κατά την διάρκεια της συνέντευξης θα ζητηθεί η άποψη του παιδιού σας αλλά και η δική σας σχετικά με την λειτουργία των τμημάτων ένταξης. Εάν αποφασίσετε να επιτρέψετε στο παιδί σας να συμμετάσχει θα πρέπει να κρατήσετε αυτό το ενημερωτικό έντυπο για δική σας αναφορά σε μεταγενέστερο στάδιο. Στο τέλος του θα βρείτε ένα έντυπο συγκατάθεσης συμμετοχής το οποίο θα πρέπει να υπογράψετε και να επιστρέψετε στον/στη δάσκαλο/α του παιδιού σας στο φάκελο που επισυνάπτεται. Εάν αποφασίσετε να επιτρέψετε στο παιδί σας να συμμετάσχει, εσείς ή το παιδί σας θα διατηρείτε το δικαίωμα να αποχωρήσετε από την έρευνα χωρίς αιτιολογία ανά πάσα στιγμή.

Όλες οι πληροφορίες που θα συλλέξουμε θα είναι εμπιστευτικές. Όταν θα συγκεντρωθούν όλα τα στοιχεία για κάθε παιδί, θα του δοθεί ένας αριθμός και το όνομα του παιδιού θα διαγραφεί. Οι πληροφορίες αυτές θα χρησιμοποιηθούν μόνο για το σκοπό της συγκεκριμένης

έρευνας. Καμία πληροφορία για οποιοδήποτε παιδί ή γονέα δεν θα δοθούν σε κανένα. Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας αυτής θα χρησιμοποιηθούν ως μέρος του Διδακτορικού με τίτλο τις Ειδικές Εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες (EdD-Doctor of Education Special Educational Needs) και ίσως δημοσιευθούν ή παρουσιαστούν σε κάποιο συνέδριο. Το σχολείο του παιδιού σας θα λάβει περίληψη των αποτελεσμάτων και εσείς μπορείτε, εάν το επιθυμείτε, να επικοινωνήσετε μαζί μου για τα αποτελέσματα στο τέλος της μελέτης.

Η έρευνα αυτή πραγματοποιείται από διδακτορική φοιτητρία με την συνεργασία των επιβλέποντων καθηγητών του προσωπικού από το Παιδαγωγικό τμήμα του Πανεπιστημίου Έξετερ της Αγγλίας. Η Επιτροπή Δεοντολογίας Ερευνών της Παιδαγωγικής σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου του Έξετερ έχει εγκρίνει τη συγκεκριμένη μελέτη.

Εάν έχετε οποιεσδήποτε απορίες που θα θέλατε να θέσετε πριν προχωρήσετε στην απόφαση σας, μη διστάσετε να επικοινωνήσετε μαζί μου στο τηλέφωνο 99583065 ή στην ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.

Σας ευχαριστώ που διαθέσατε το χρόνο σας για να ενημερωθείτε για αυτή την ερευνητική μελέτη.

Με εκτίμηση
Κωνσταντία Διαλεκτάκη
Πανεπιστήμιο του Έξετερ –
University of Exeter
Graduate School of Education



ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗΣ

Να επιστραφεί στον/στη δάσκαλο/α του παιδιού σας στον φάκελο που εσωκλείεται

Τίτλος Έρευνας:

«Η ένταξη των παιδιών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στα δημόσια σχολεία της πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευσης»

Όνομα και διεύθυνση επικοινωνίας της Ερευνήτριας:

Κωνσταντία Διαλεκτάκη
Πανεπιστήμιο του Έξετερ –

University of Exeter
Graduate School of Education
St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter
EX1 2LU
Email: kd246@exeter.ac.uk
Τηλ: 6932484248/00447772188447

Παρακαλώ υποδείξτε με V

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Δηλώνω ότι έχω διαβάσει και κατανοώ το ενημερωτικό έντυπο που αφορά τη πιο πάνω μελέτη. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Αντιλαμβάνομαι ότι τόσο η δική μου συμμετοχή όσο και του παιδιού μου είναι εθελοντική και ότι και οι δύο είμαστε ελεύθεροι να αποσυρθούμε ανά πάσα στιγμή και χωρίς αιτιολογία. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Συμφωνώ να συμμετάσχω σε αυτή τη μελέτη και επιτρέπω στο παιδί μου να συμμετάσχει στη πιο πάνω μελέτη. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Όνομα Παιδιού

Ημερομηνία

Γεννήσεως Παιδιού

Όνομα Γονέα/κηδεμόνα

Ημερομηνία

Υπογραφή

Appendix 10: Consent forms for teachers (in Greek)

The connect form for teachers is the same as in Appendix 8, except of the following part in the first three lines:



ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗΣ

Αγαπητέ/ή Δάσκαλε/Δασκάλα,

Με το παρόν έντυπο σας ζητείται να συμμετάσχετε στην ερευνητική μελέτη που σκοπό έχει να κατανοήσει την σχολική ένταξη των μαθητών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση.

Να επιστραφεί στον/στην Διευθυντή/Διευθύντρια του σχολείου σας στον φάκελο που εσωκλείεται

Τίτλος Έρευνας:

«Η ένταξη των παιδιών με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες στα δημόσια σχολεία της πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευσης»

Όνομα και διεύθυνση επικοινωνίας της Ερευνήτριας:

Κωνσταντία Διαλεκτάκη

Πανεπιστήμιο του Έξετερ –

University of Exeter

Graduate School of Education
St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter
EX1 2LU
Email: kd246@exeter.ac.uk
Τηλ: 6932484248/00447772188447

Παρακαλώ υποδείξτε με V

1. Δηλώνω ότι έχω διαβάσει και κατανοώ το ενημερωτικό έντυπο που αφορά τη πιο πάνω μελέτη. ☐
2. Αντιλαμβάνομαι ότι τόσο η συμμετοχή μου είναι εθελοντική και ότι είμαι ελεύθερος/η να αποχωρήσω ανά πάσα στιγμή και χωρίς αιτιολογία. ☐
3. Συμφωνώ να συμμετάσχω στη πιο πάνω μελέτη. ☐

Όνομα Δασκάλου/Δασκάλας

Ημερομηνία

